



ALEX ALICE

SIEGFRIED II

THE VALKYRIE





in association with PENDRAGON IMAGEFORGE



THE VALKYRIE

written and illustrated by ALEX ALICE

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Rebecca Taylor, *Editor*
Scott Newman, *Letters & Design*

Archaia Entertainment LLC

Jack Cummins, *President & COO*
Mark Smylie, *CCO*
Mike Kennedy, *Publisher*

Stephen Christy, *Editor-in-Chief*
Mel Caylo, *Marketing Manager*
Scott Newman, *Production Manager*

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YOU ARE
THE **EARTH**
MY LOVE...

...HOW
COULD
YOU **DIE?**

MY BREATH IS **FROZEN**...

...MY SKIN FEELING A **CHILL**...

...MY BOWELS ARE
BURNING...

...IT IS EATING ME
FROM THE INSIDE
OUT...



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THE VALKYRIE

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MY LOVE...

...HOW
COULD
YOU **DIE?**

MY BREATH IS **FROZEN**...

...MY SKIN FEELING A **CHILL**...

...MY BOWELS ARE
BURNING...

...IT IS EATING ME
FROM THE INSIDE
OUT...

I'M *DYING*, ODIN.

THE EARTH IS DYING...

OVERTURE

...AND YOU CAN'T STOP IT.

IF I
CAN'T
SAVE
YOU...

...
SIEGFRIED
CAN.

ONLY IF HE STAYS
FREE, ODIN...

...ONLY IF HE DOESN'T
PAY ATTENTION TO
THE GODS.

THAT'S WHY
I RID THE
WORLD OF THE
INSTRUMENTS
OF MY WILL.

THIS
MORNING
THE WORLD
IS FREE
OF GODS,
SIEGFRIED IS
FREE...

...THERE
IS STILL
HOPE.

YOU HAVE GATHERED
OUR CHILDREN IN YOUR
STONE HALL.

ALL OUR BOYS.

ALL OUR GIRLS.

THEY ALL
ANSWERED YOUR CALL
BEFORE DAWN...

...EXCEPT ONE.

SHE IS
THE MOST
LOYAL. THE ONE
CLOSEST TO MY
HEART. SHE WILL
BE HERE BEFORE
THE DAWN.

ODIN...

YOU HAVE HELD UP THE SUN
TOO LONG ALREADY.



SHE WON'T COME.

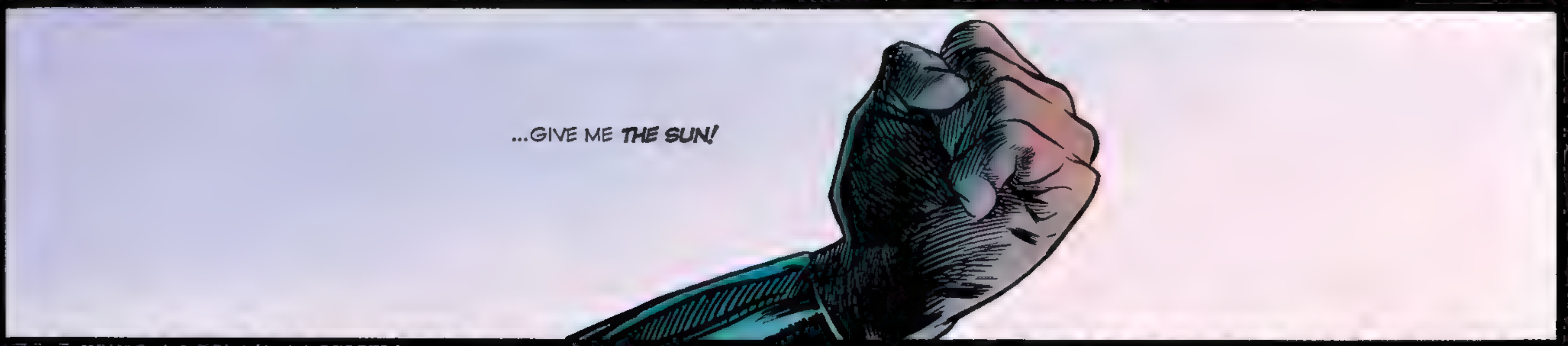
LET THE DAWN BREAK...

...THE EARTH DEMANDS IT.

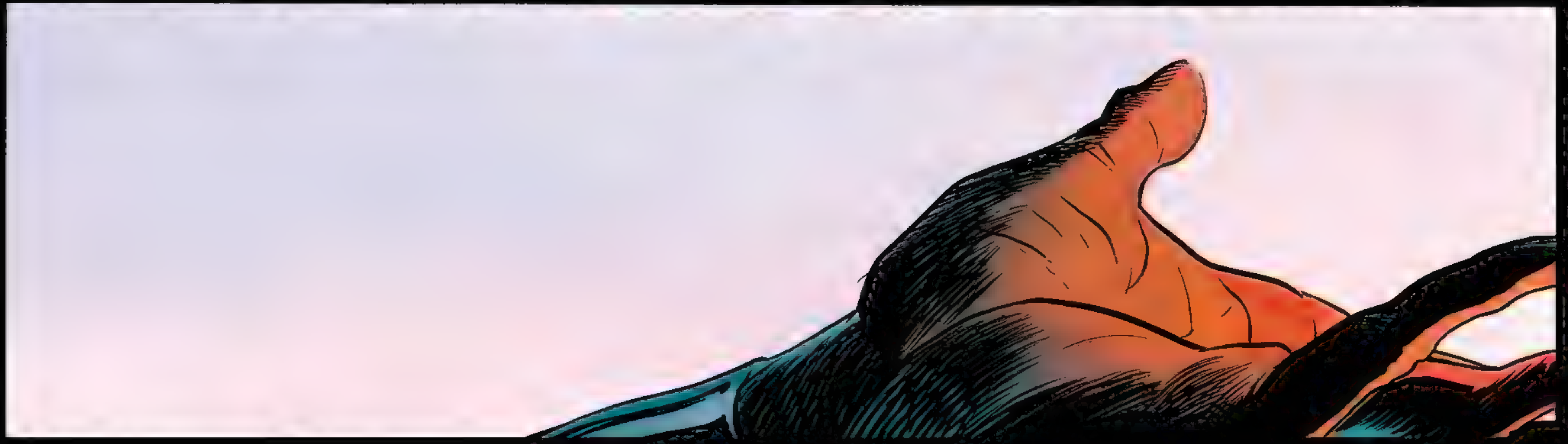


MY LOVE...

...GOD OF GODS...



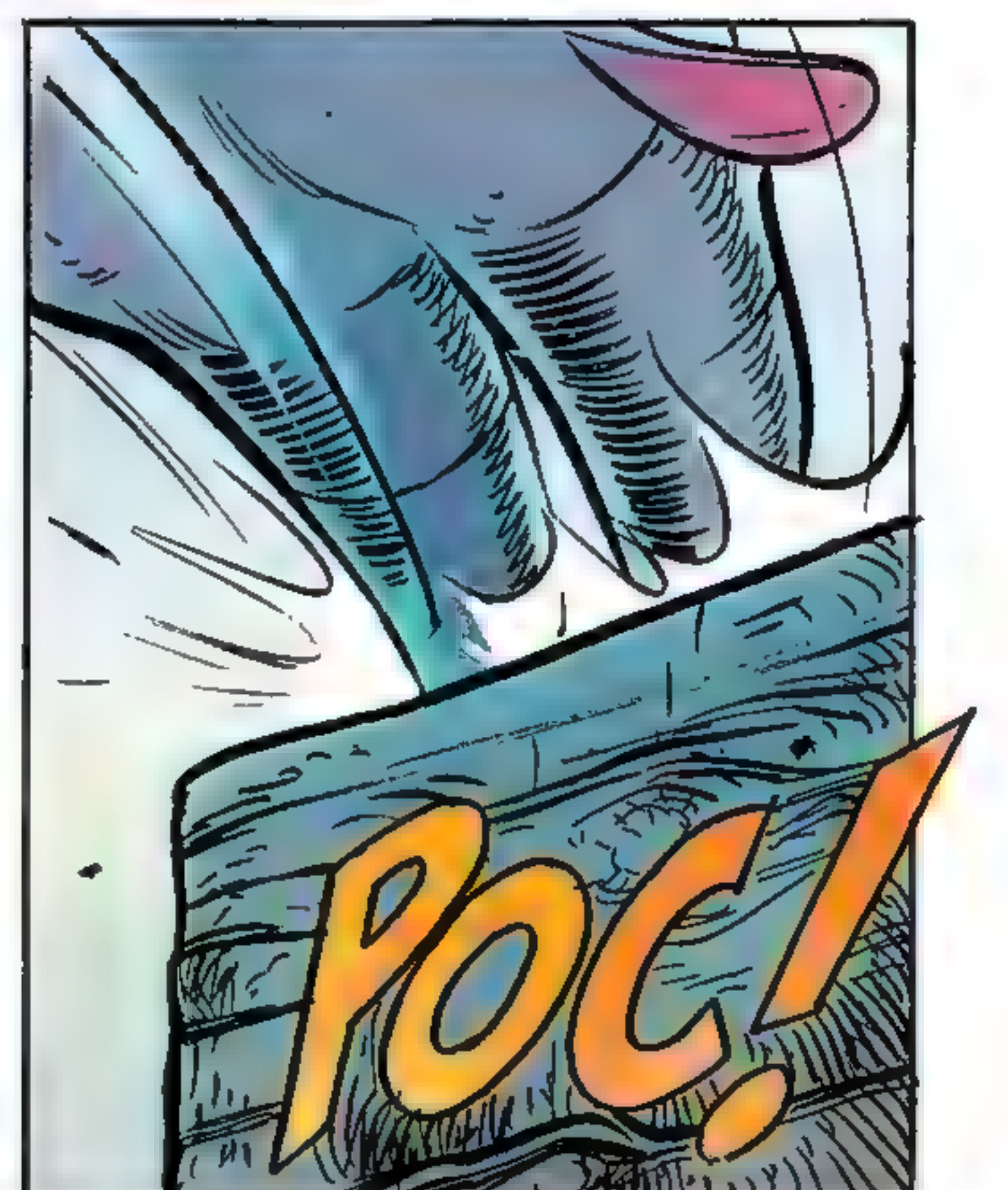
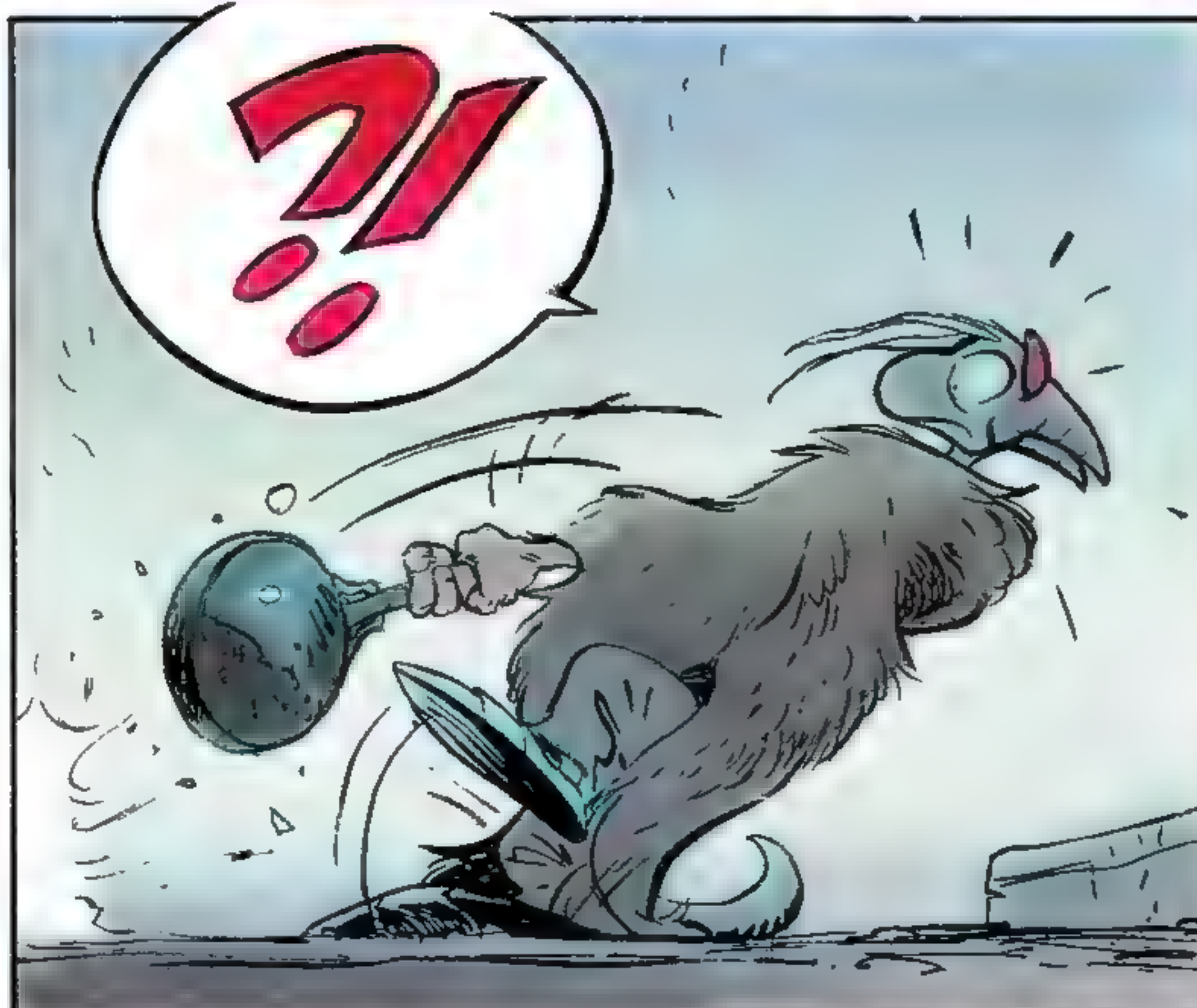
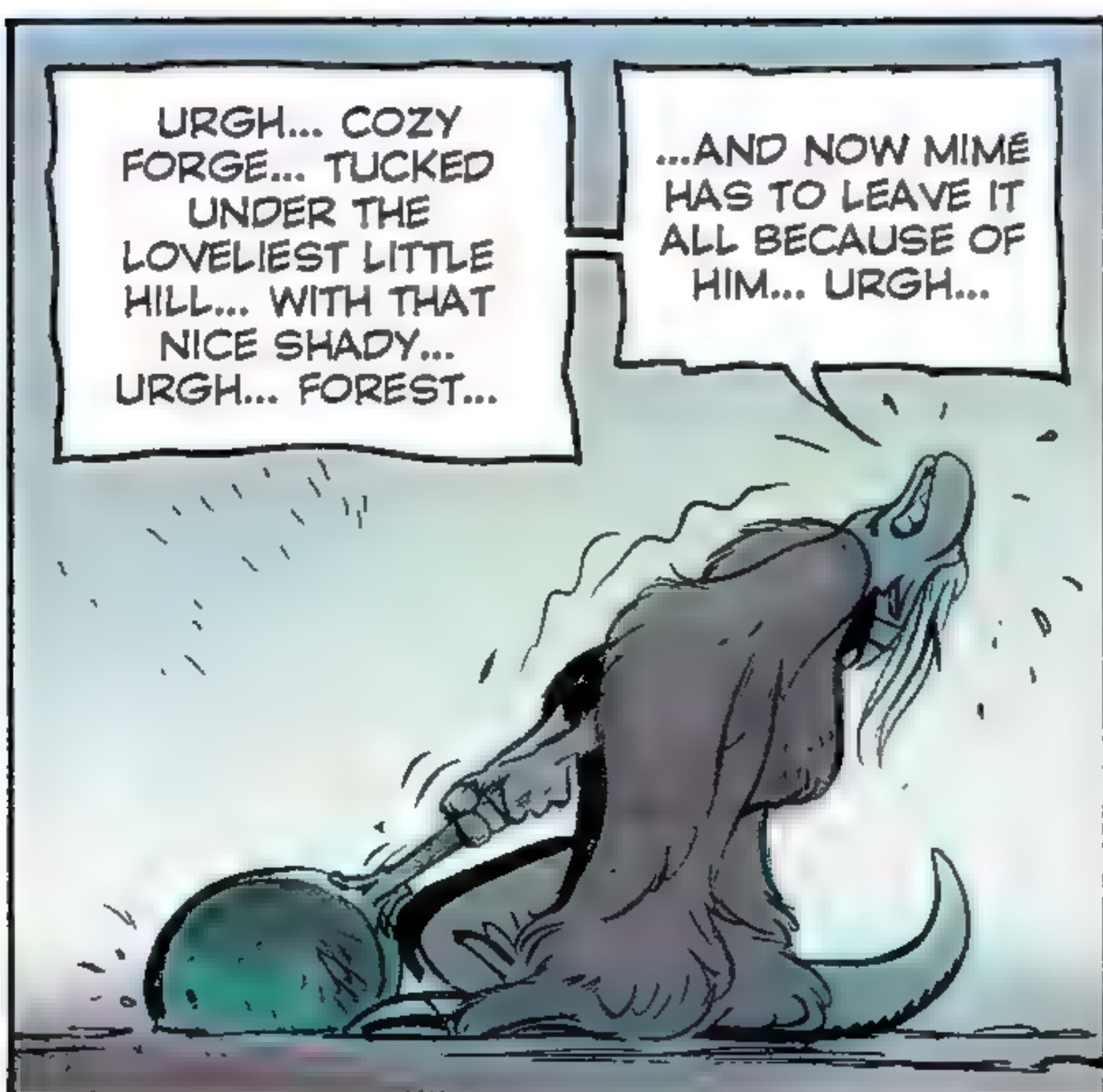
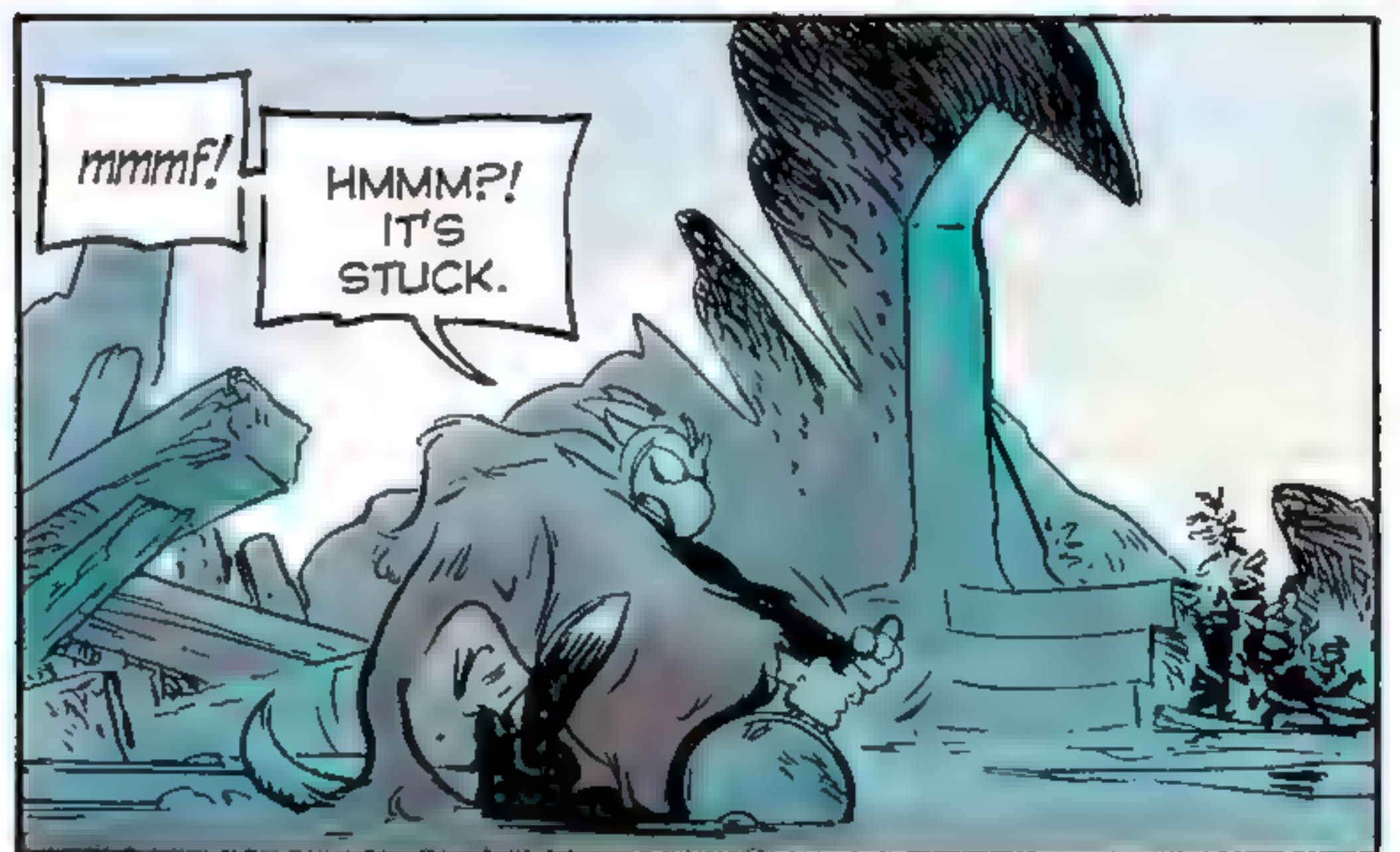
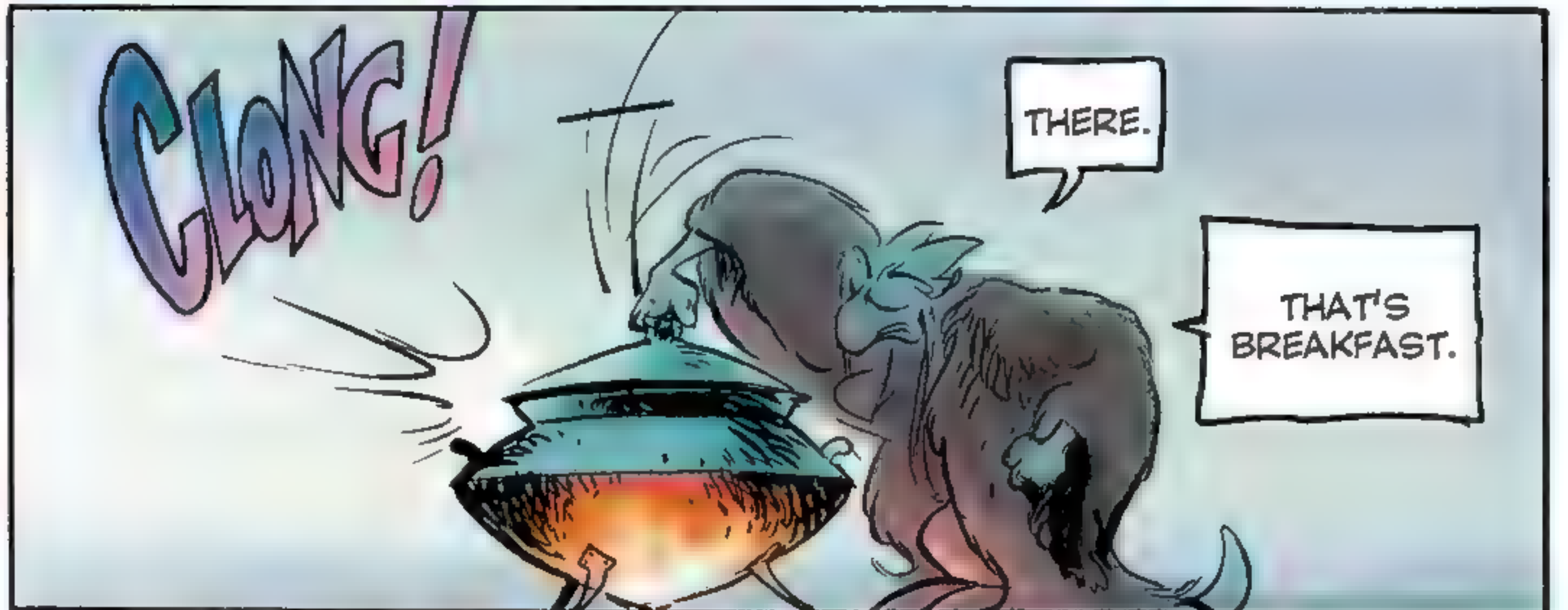
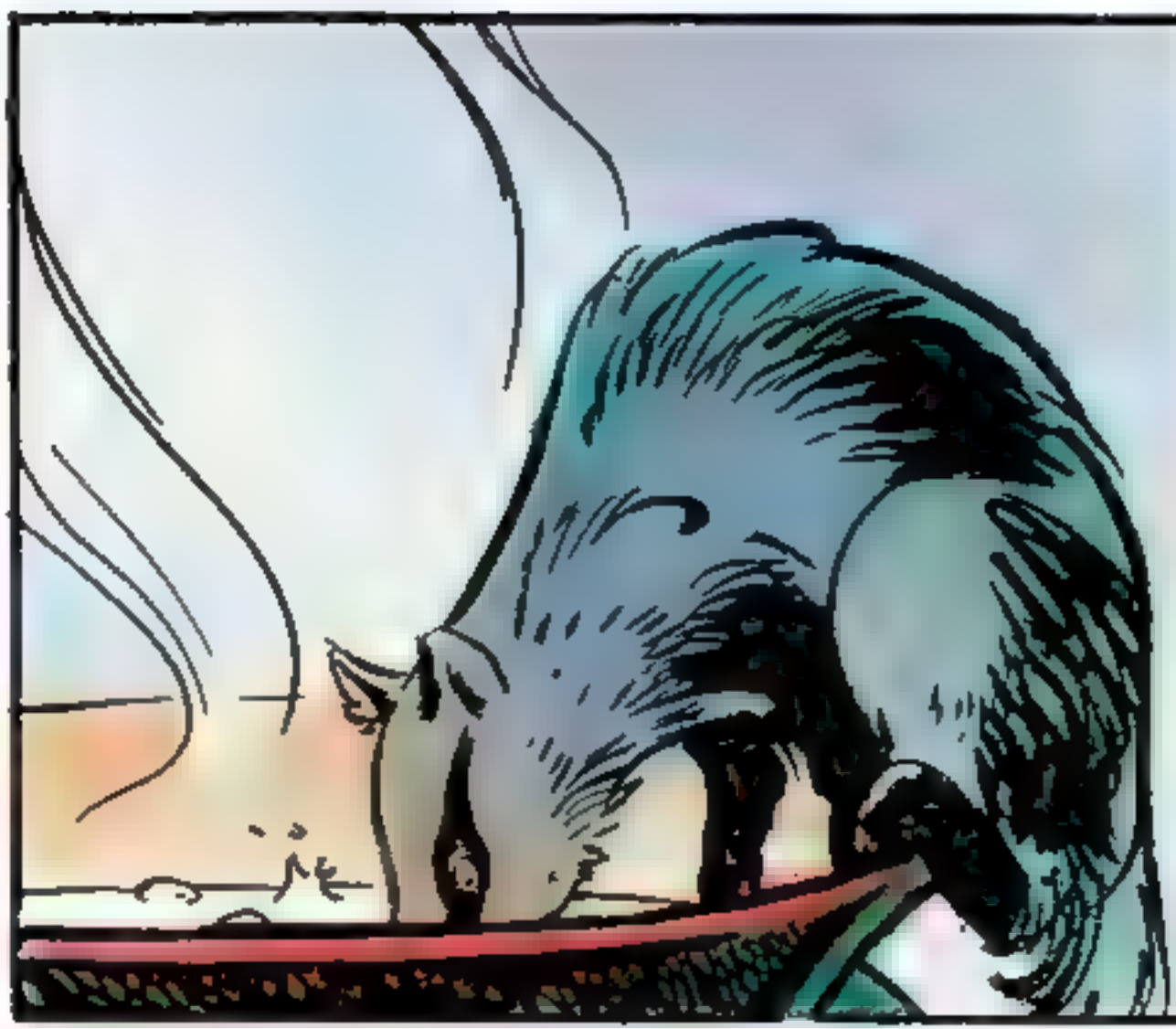
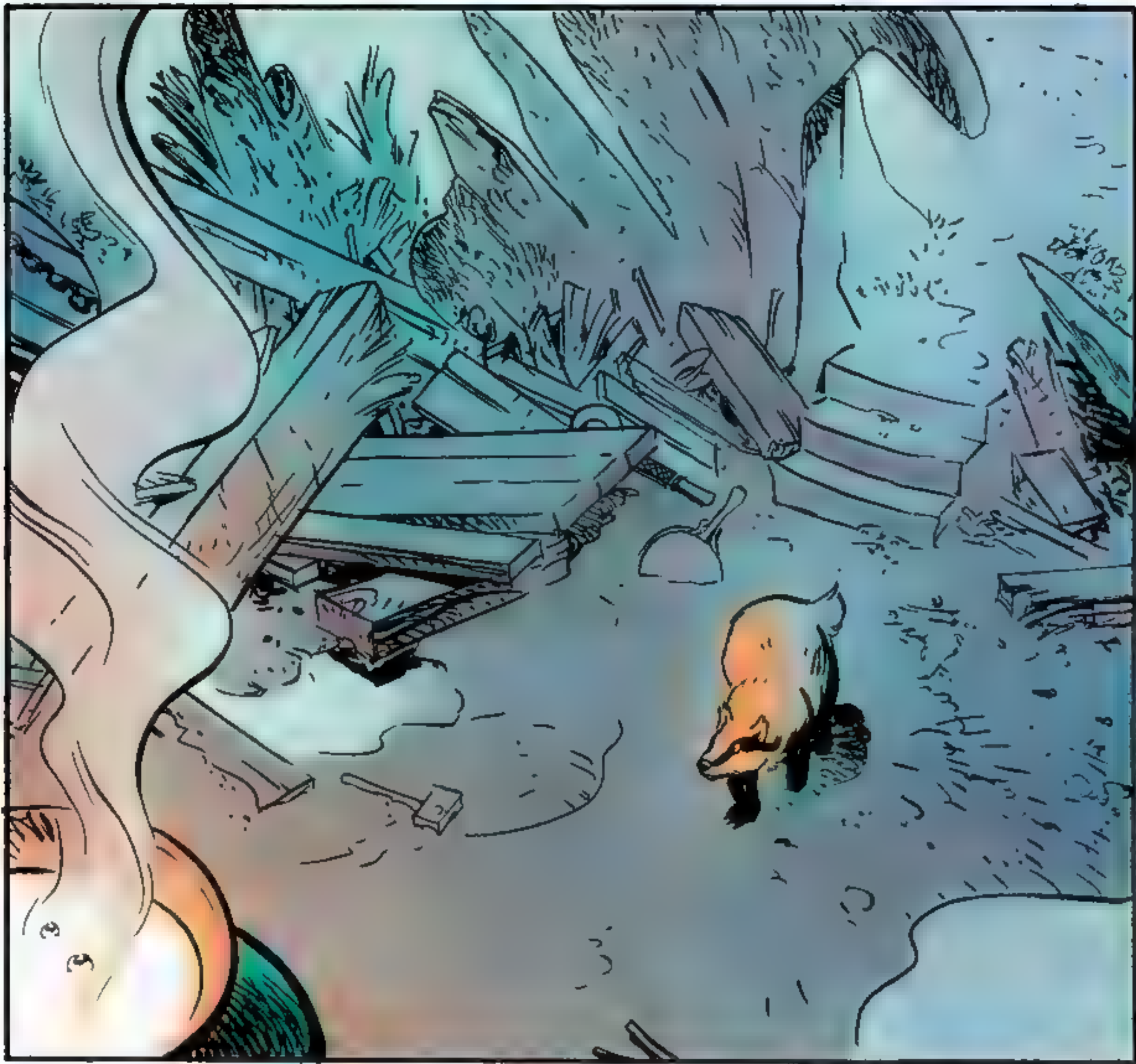
...GIVE ME *THE* SUN!

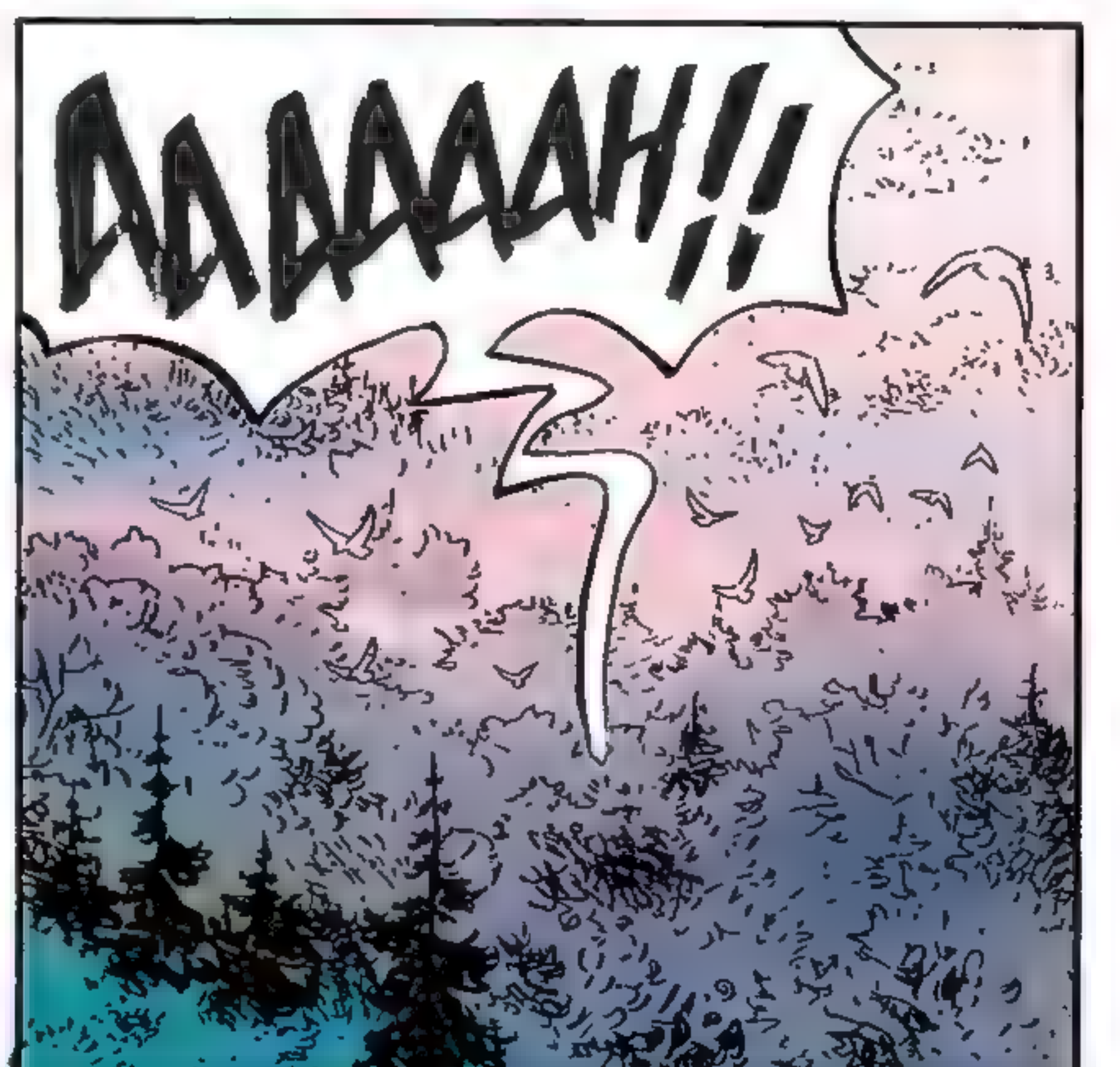
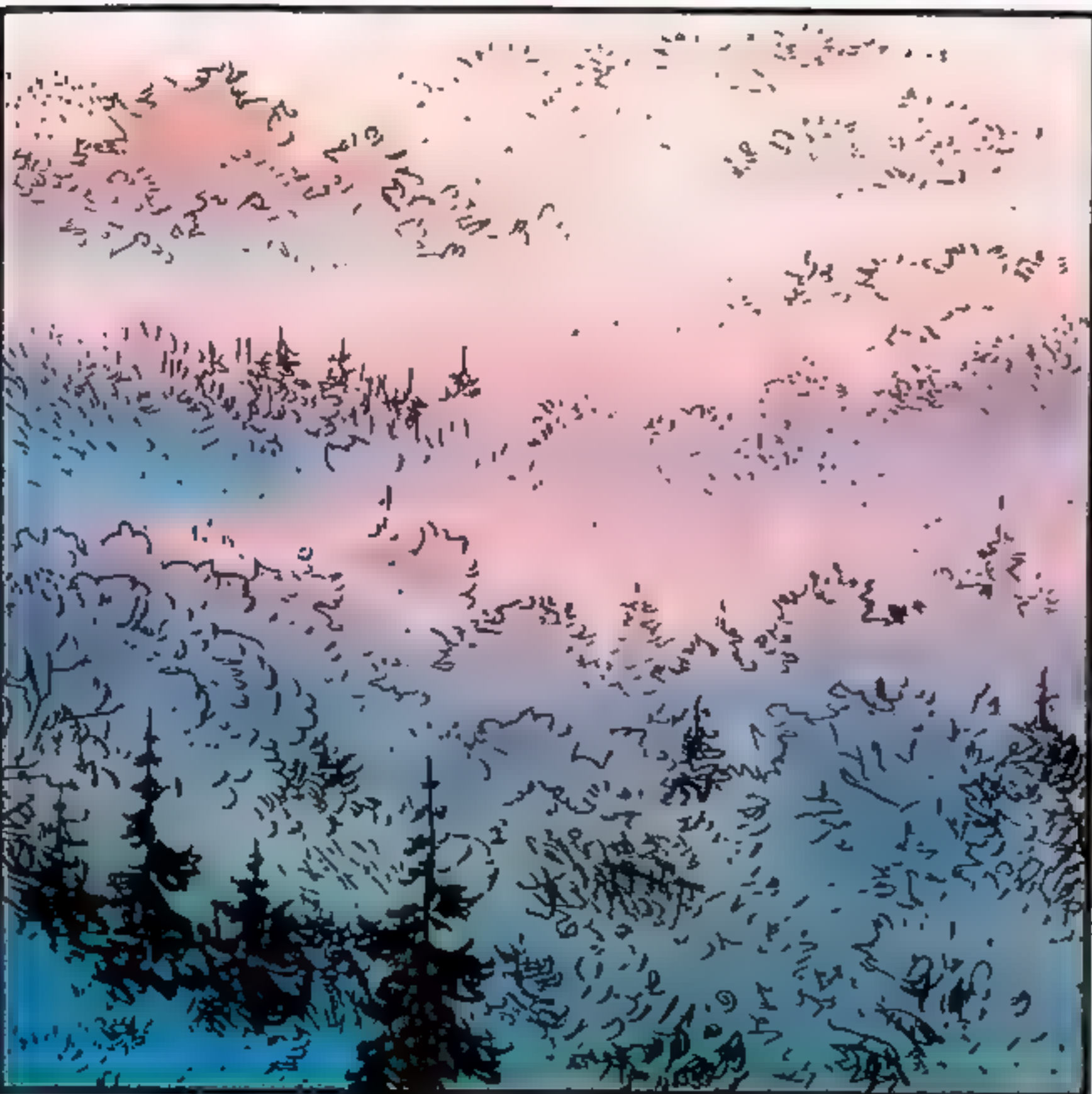
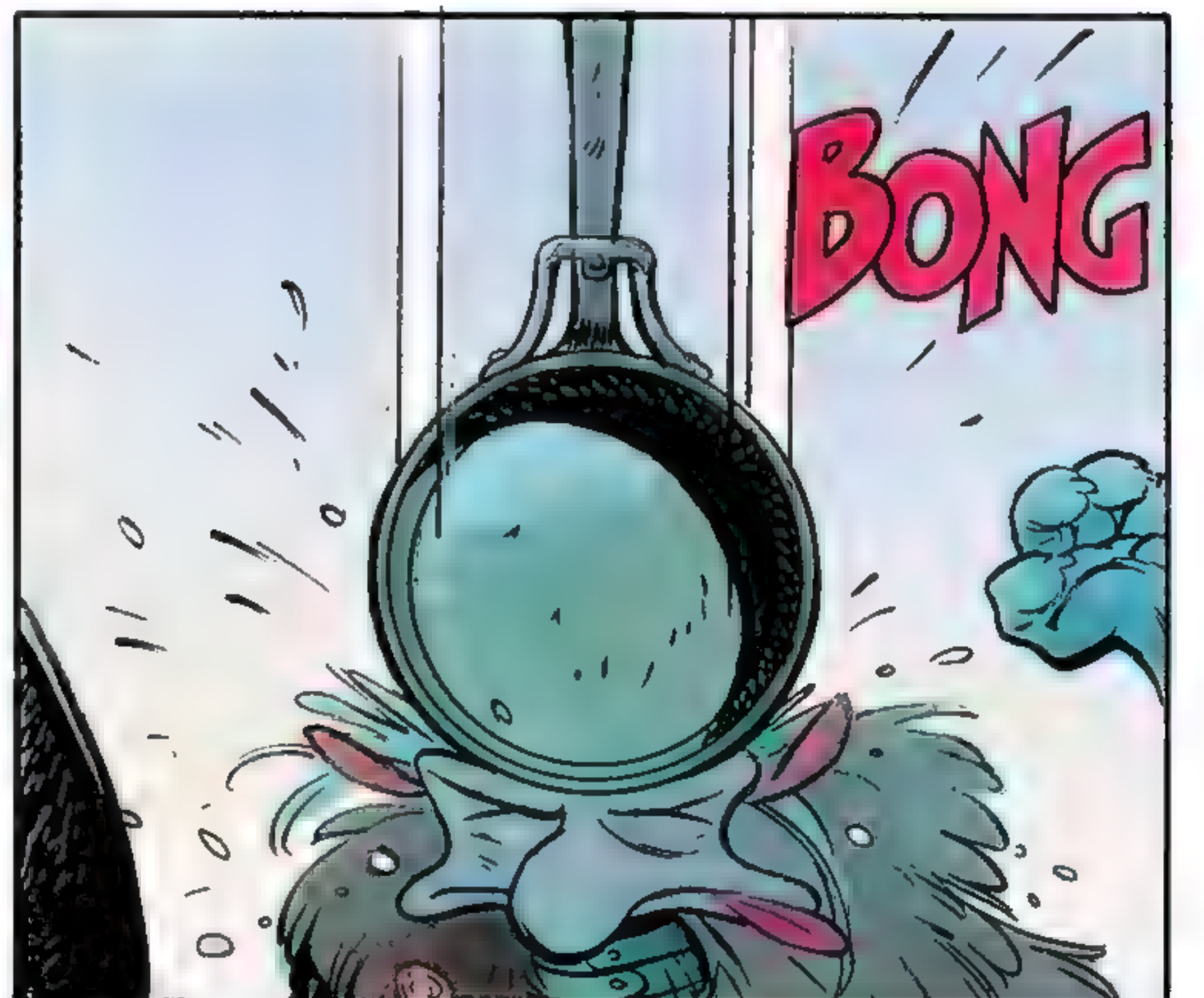
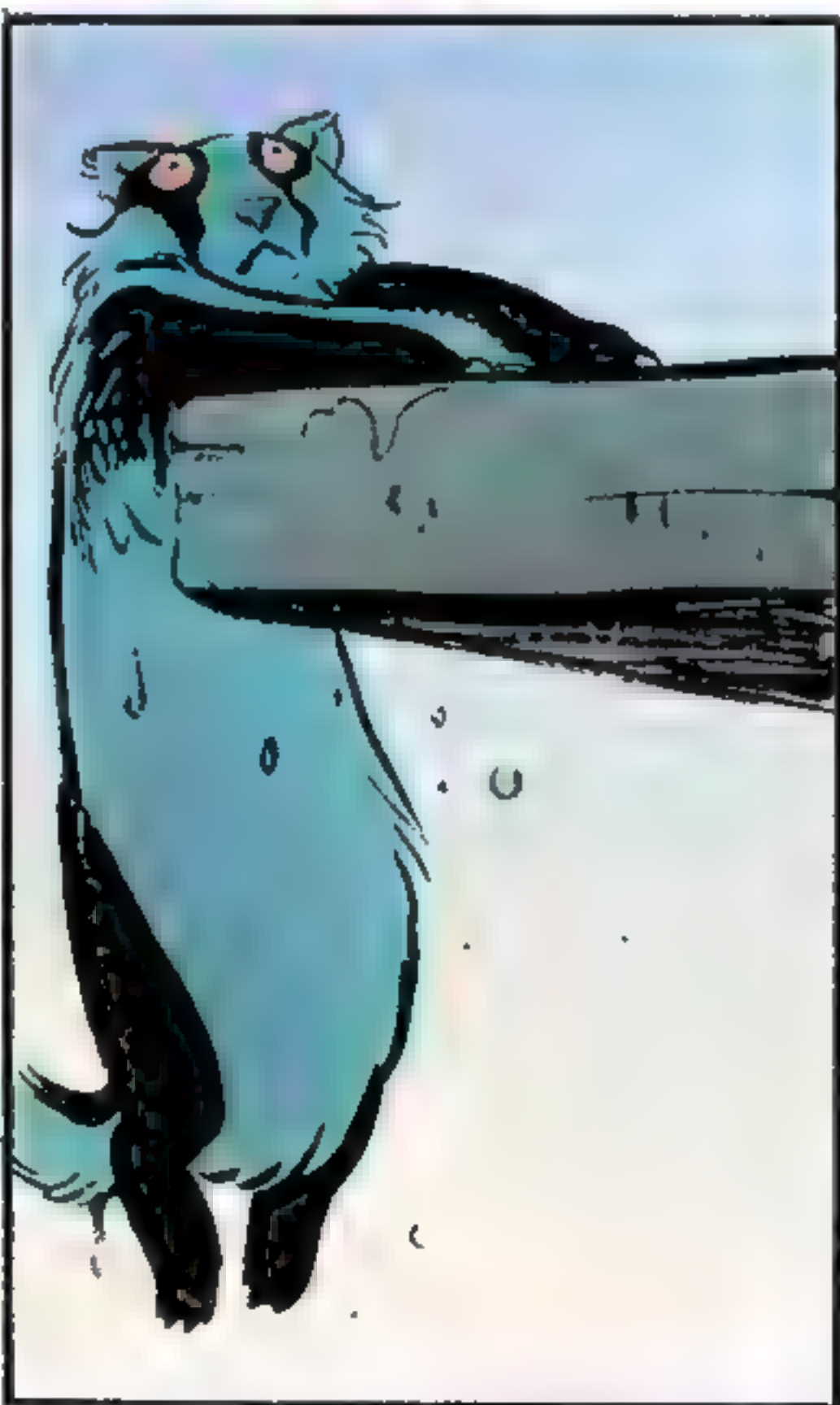
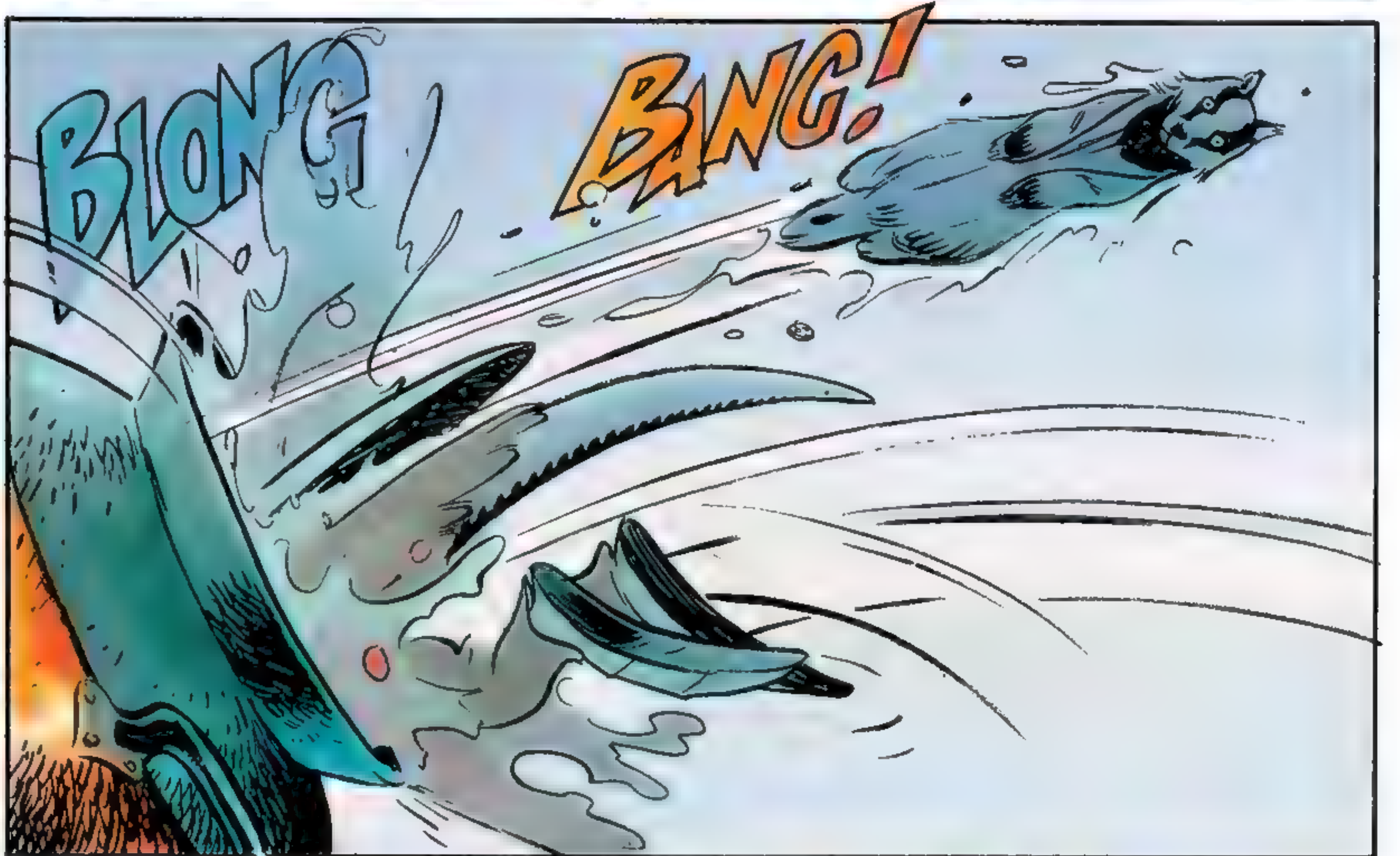
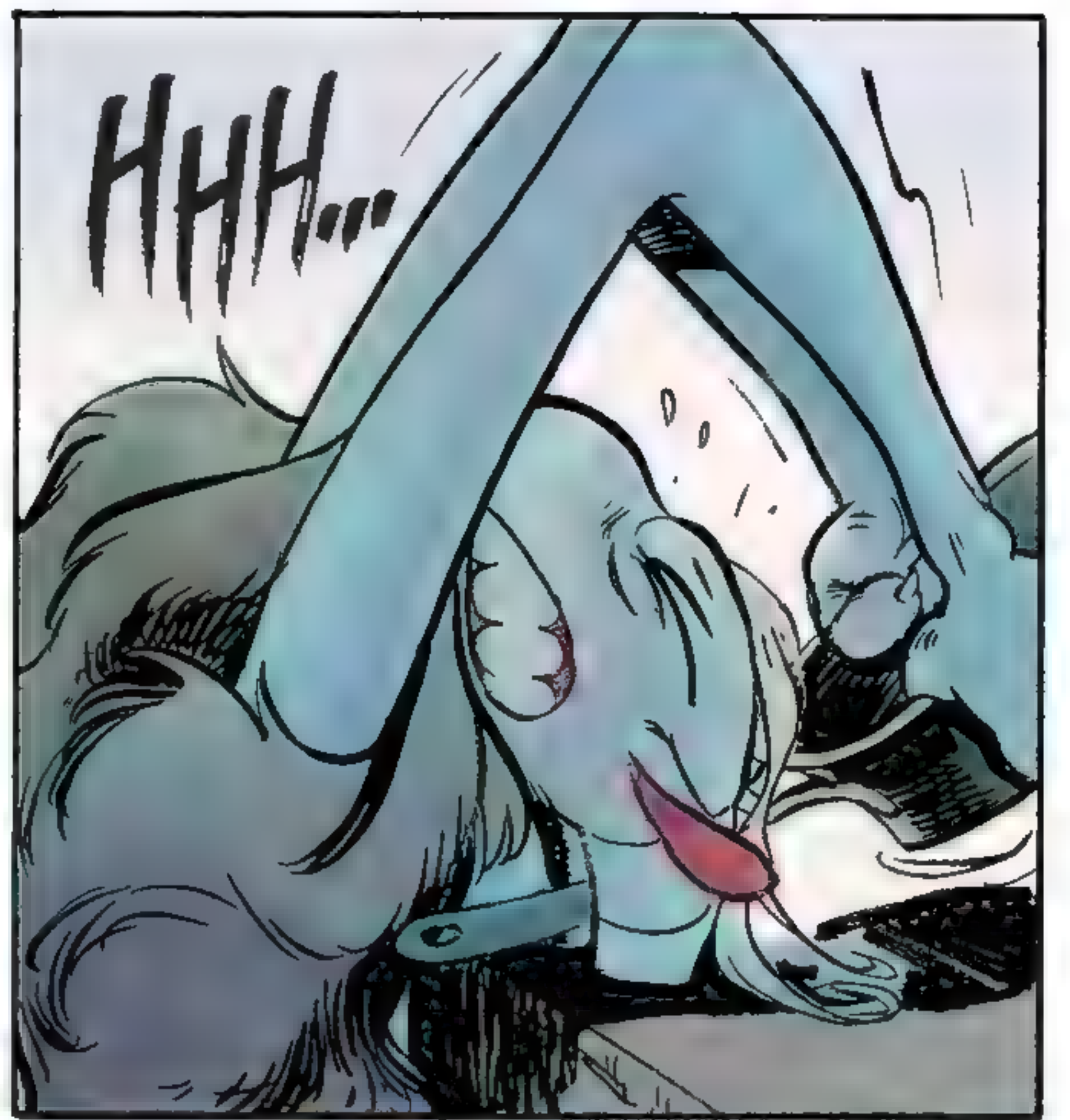
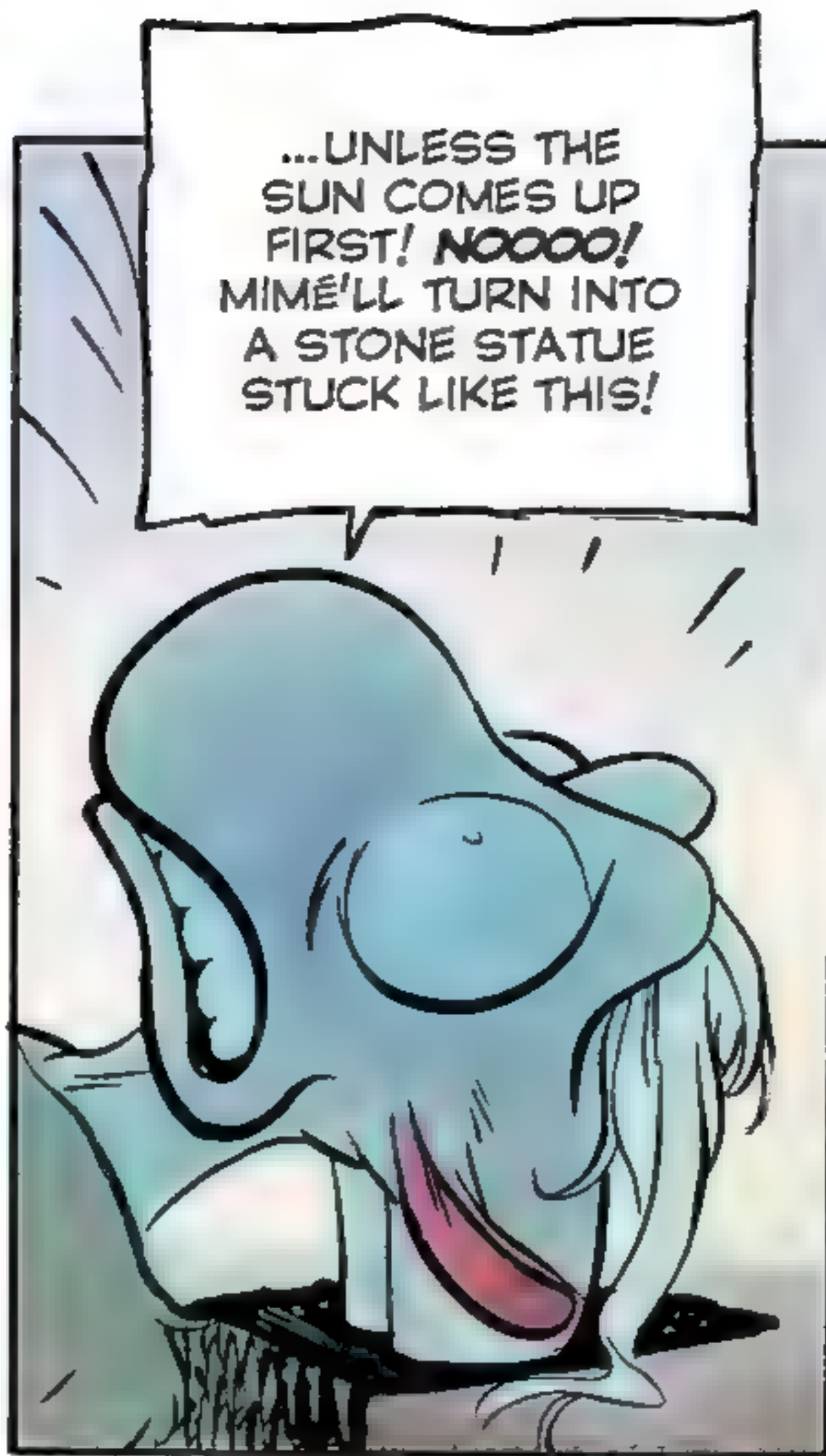
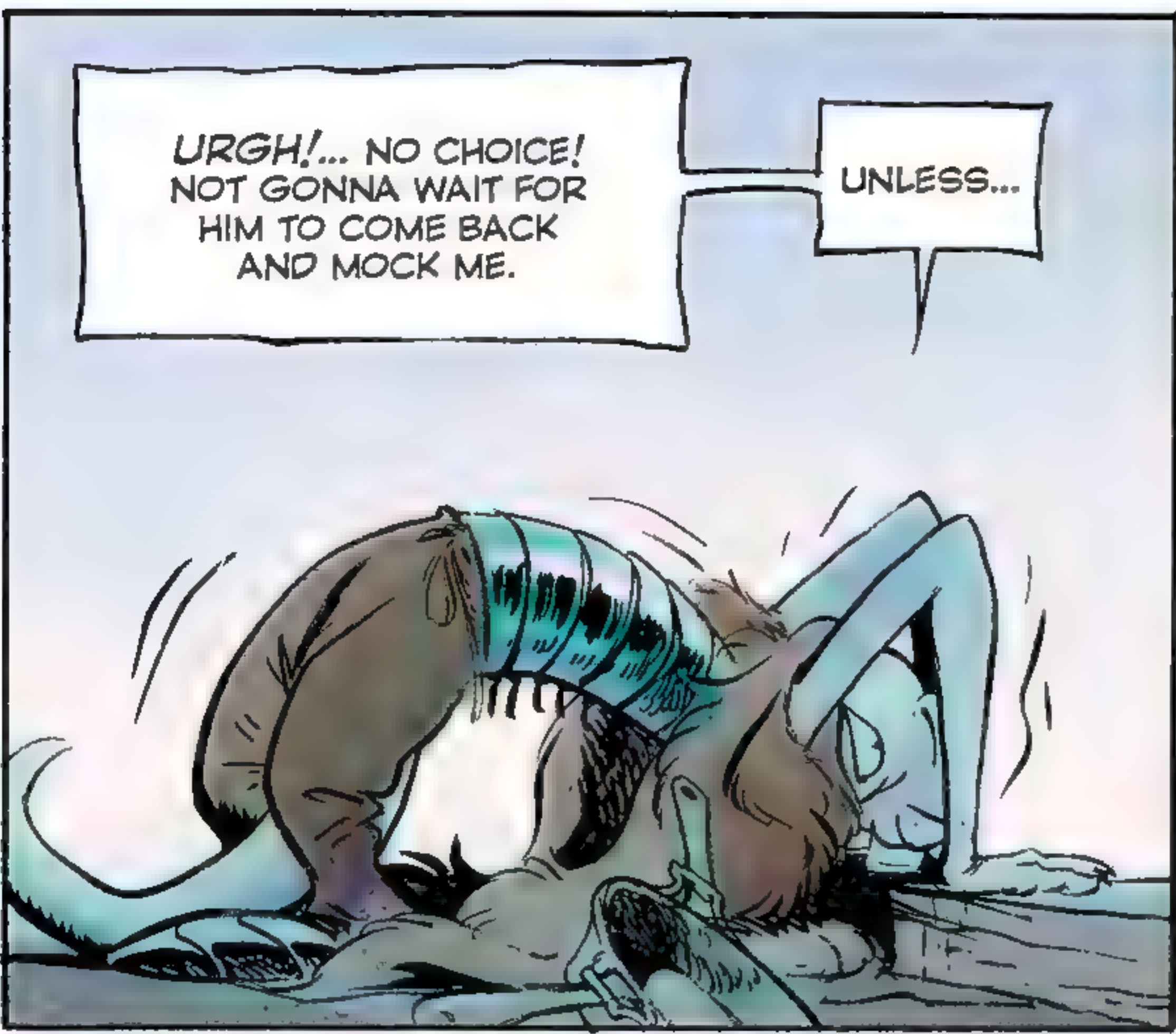


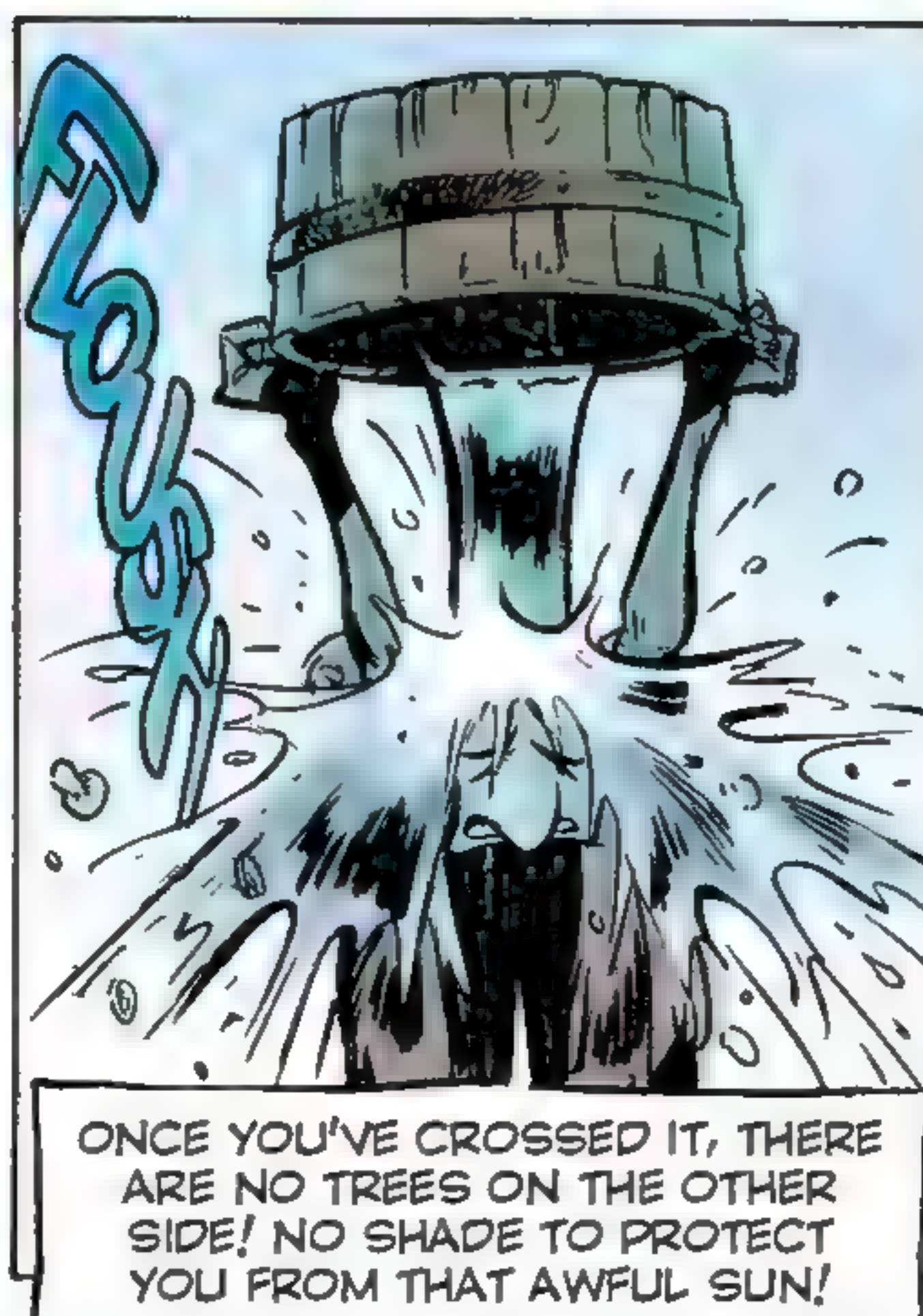
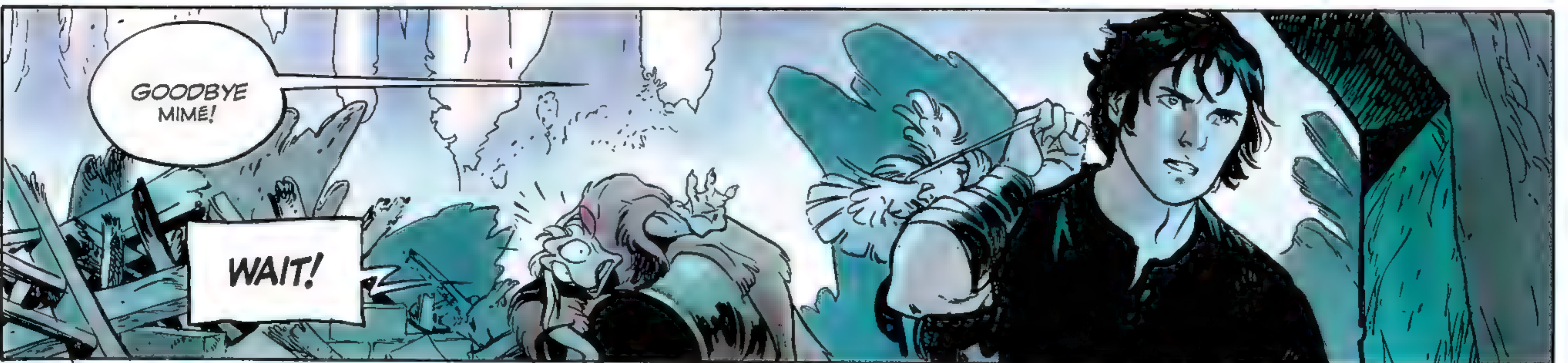
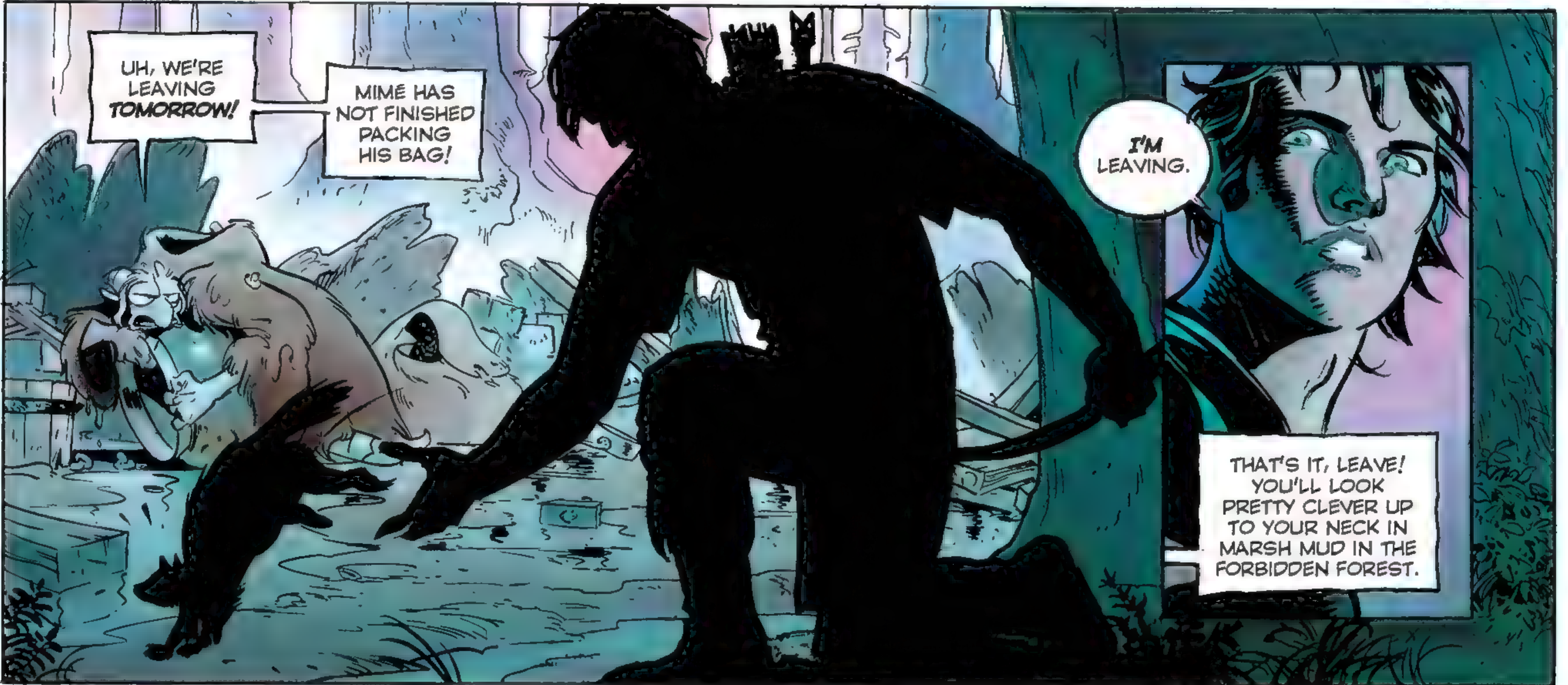
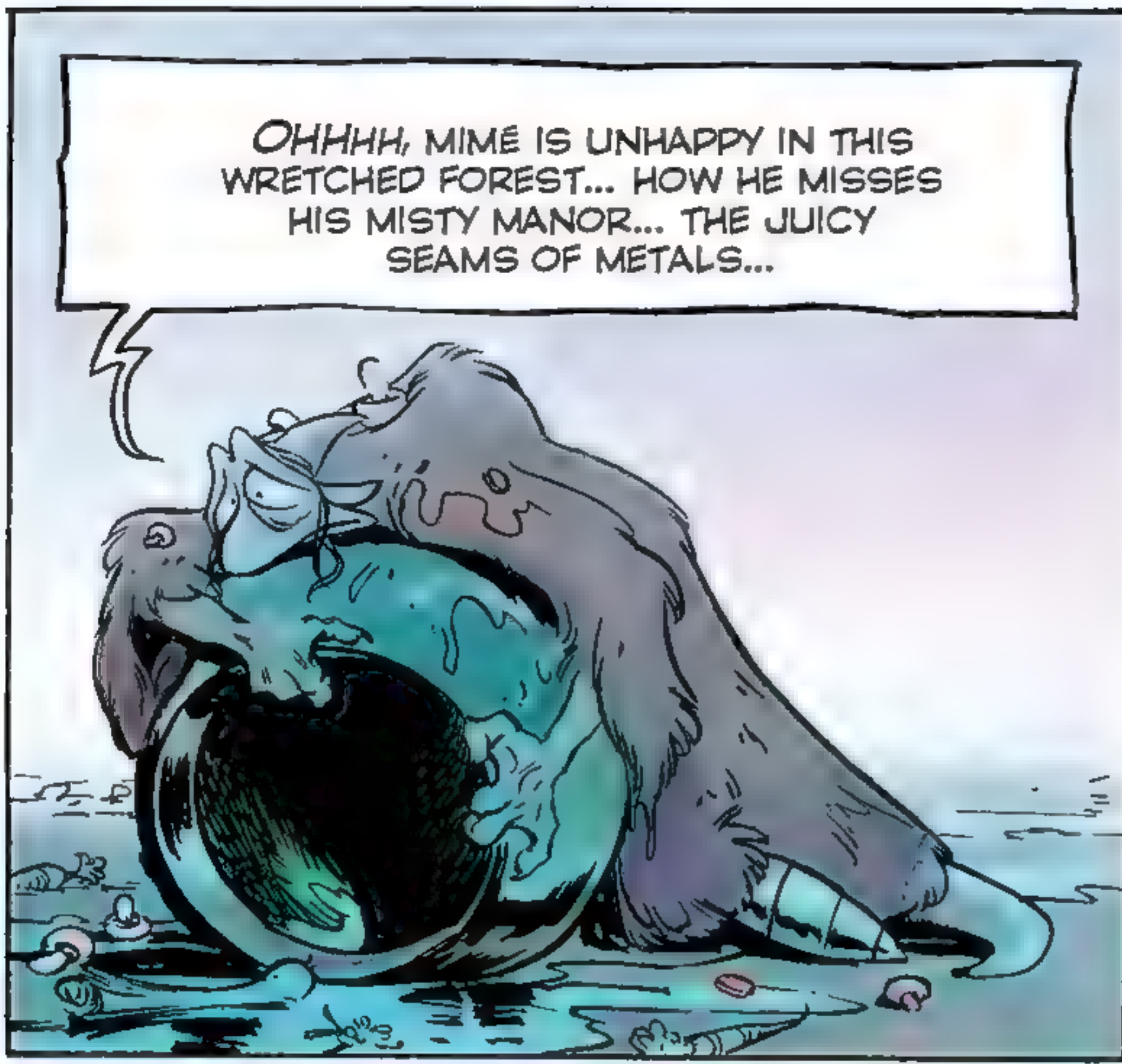


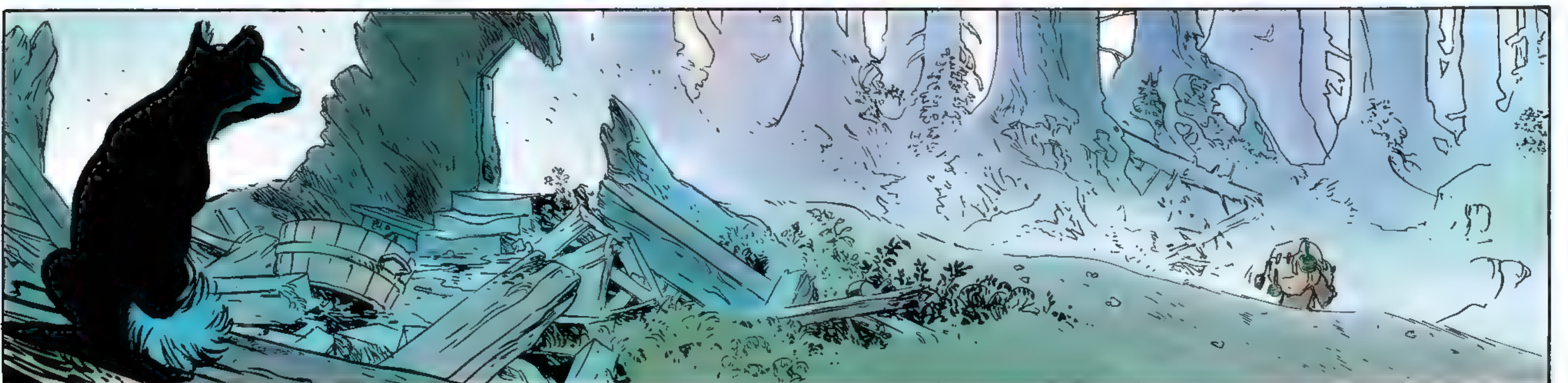
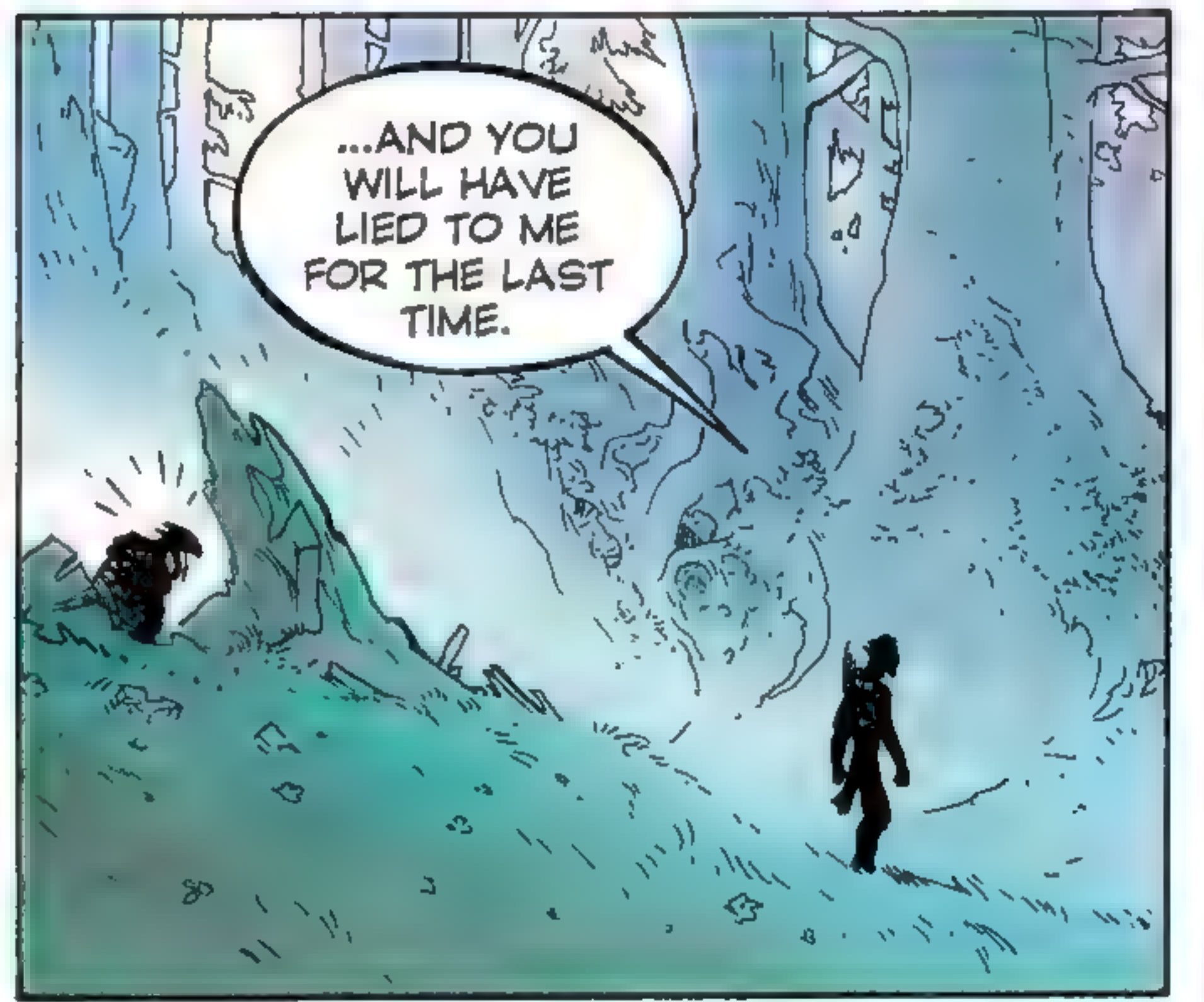
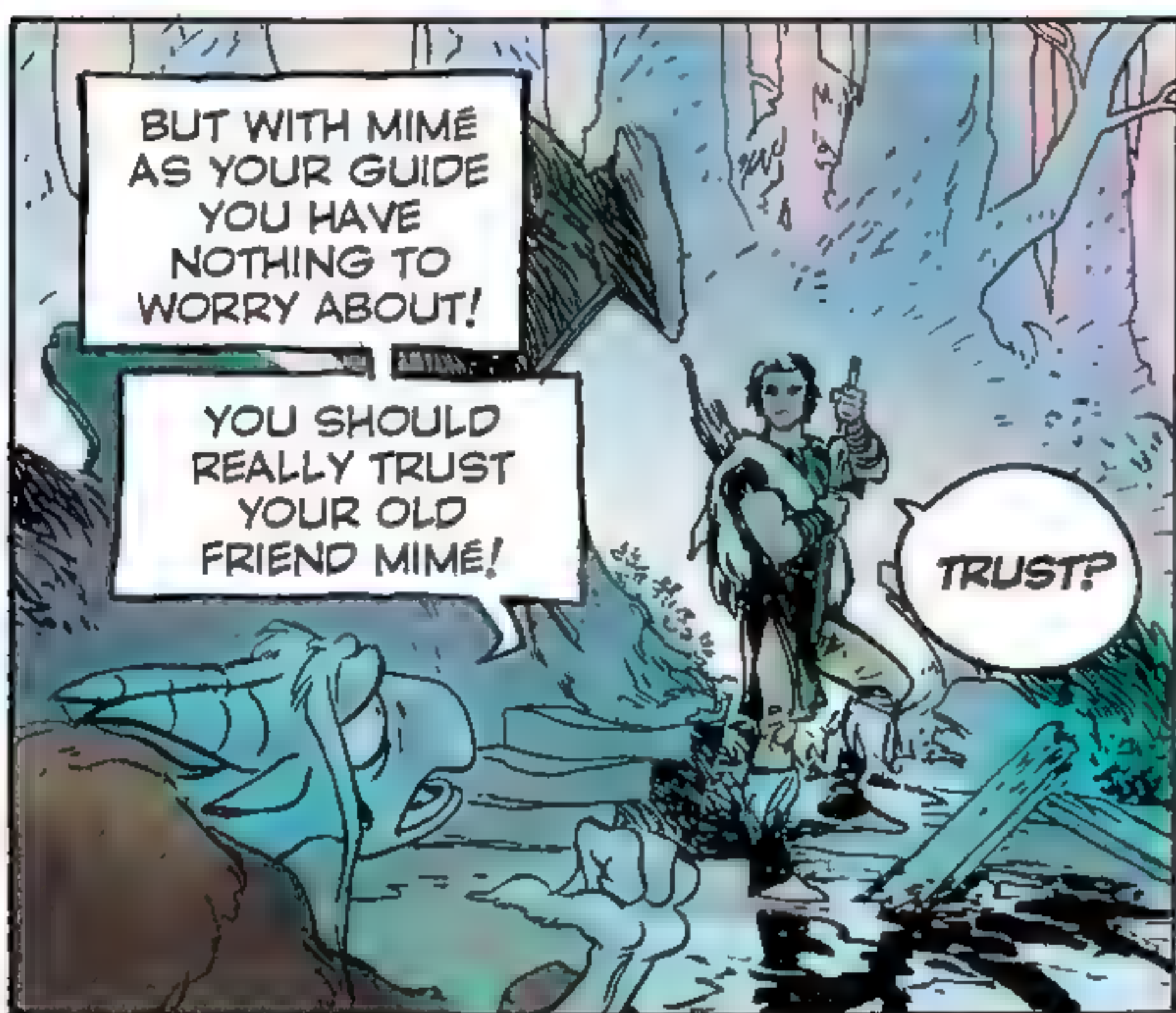
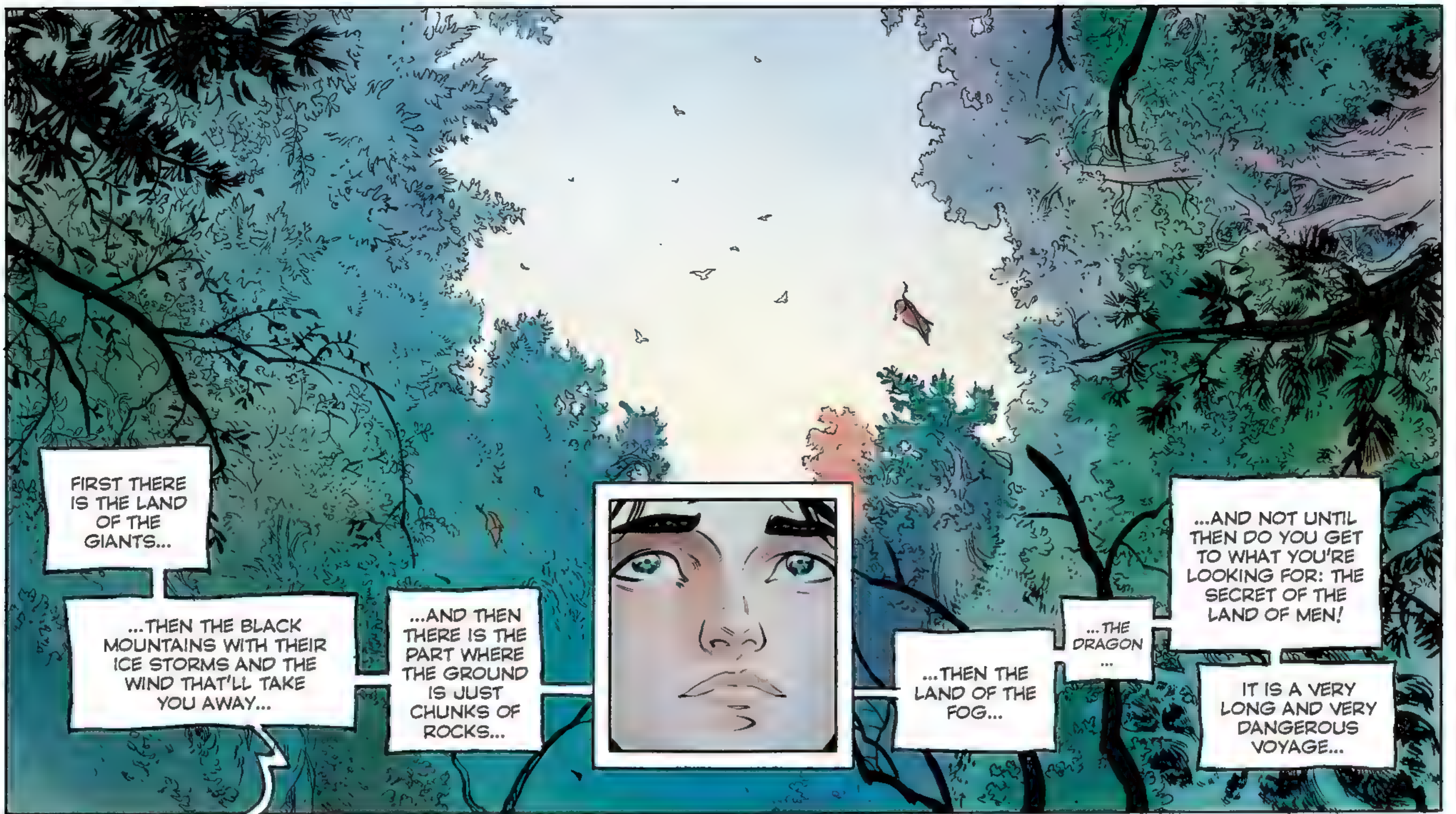


ALEX ALICE
WALKYRIE











HAVE YOU BROUGHT ENOUGH SUPPLIES? THE CREATURES THAT RUN AROUND THE FORBIDDEN FOREST ARE NOT EASY TO CATCH...

...AND THE **WITCH** DOES NOT LIKE IT WHEN YOU TOUCH HER PLANTS!

THERE'S NEVER BEEN A **WITCH**!



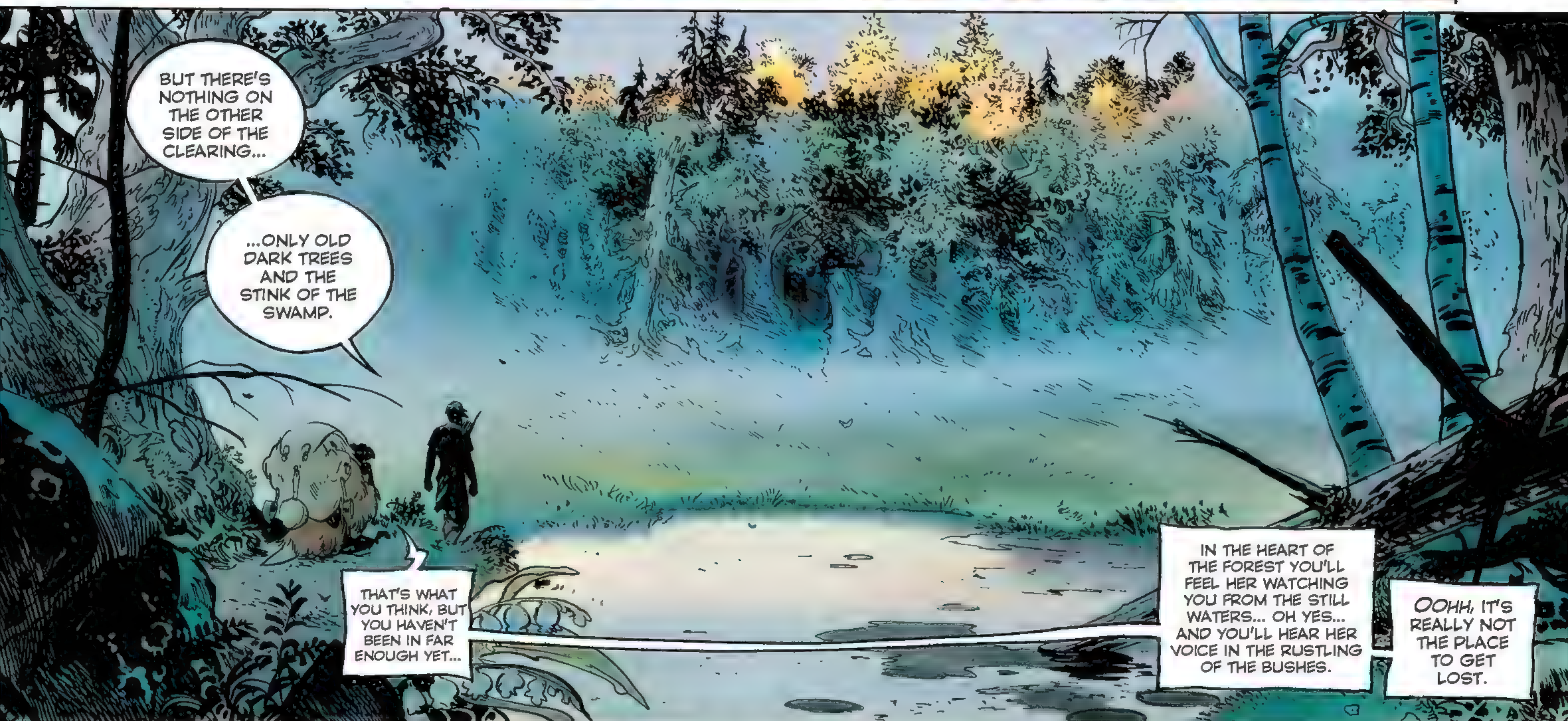
HOW DO YOU KNOW, SMARTY?

I LOOKED FOR HER.



ARE YOU **NUTS**!

SHE CAN'T BE WORSE THAN YOU!



BUT THERE'S NOTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLEARING...

...ONLY OLD DARK TREES AND THE STINK OF THE SWAMP.

THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, BUT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN IN FAR ENOUGH YET...

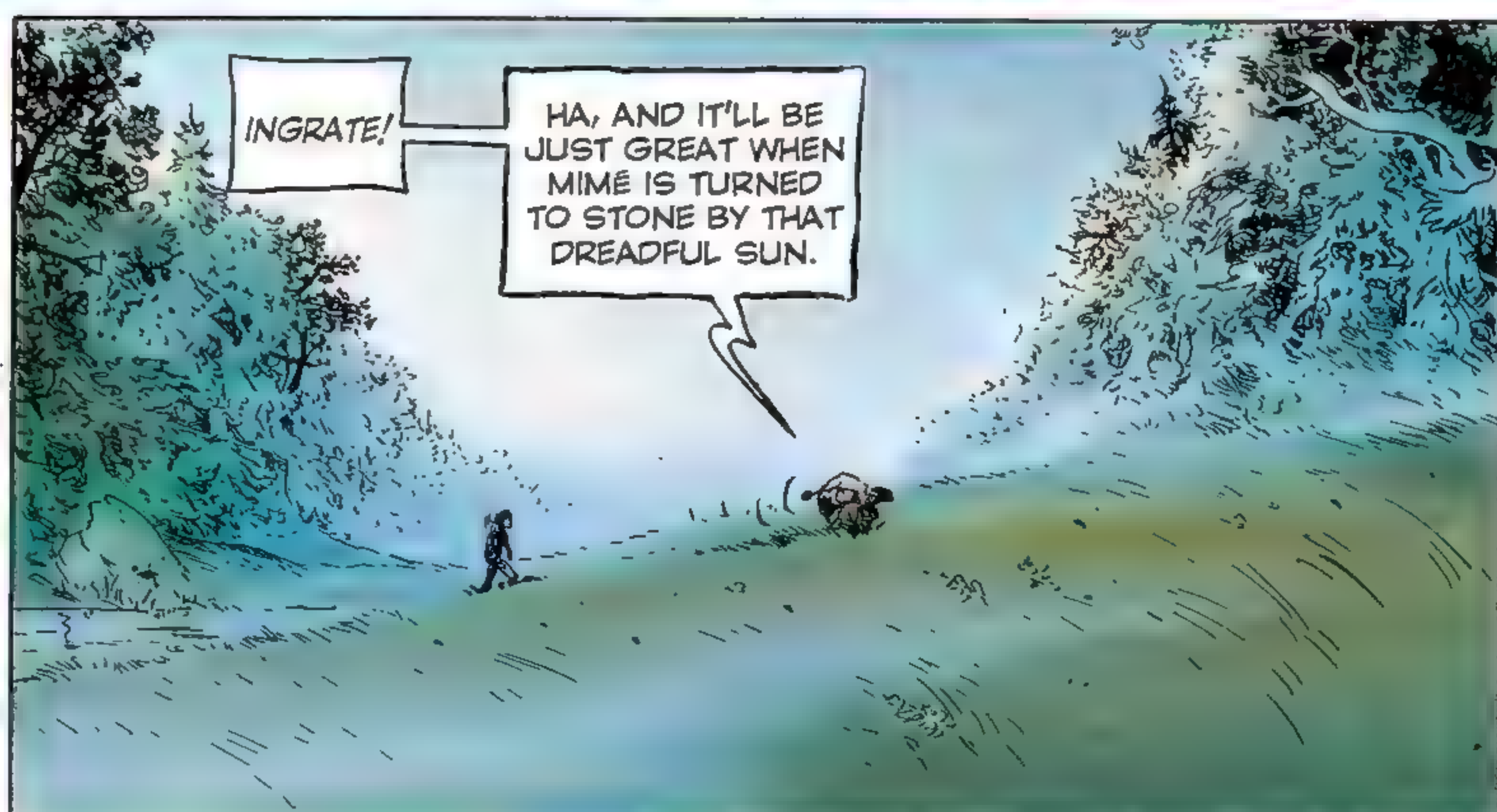
IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST YOU'LL FEEL HER WATCHING YOU FROM THE STILL WATERS... OH YES... AND YOU'LL HEAR HER VOICE IN THE RUSTLING OF THE BUSHES.

OOHH, IT'S REALLY NOT THE PLACE TO GET LOST.



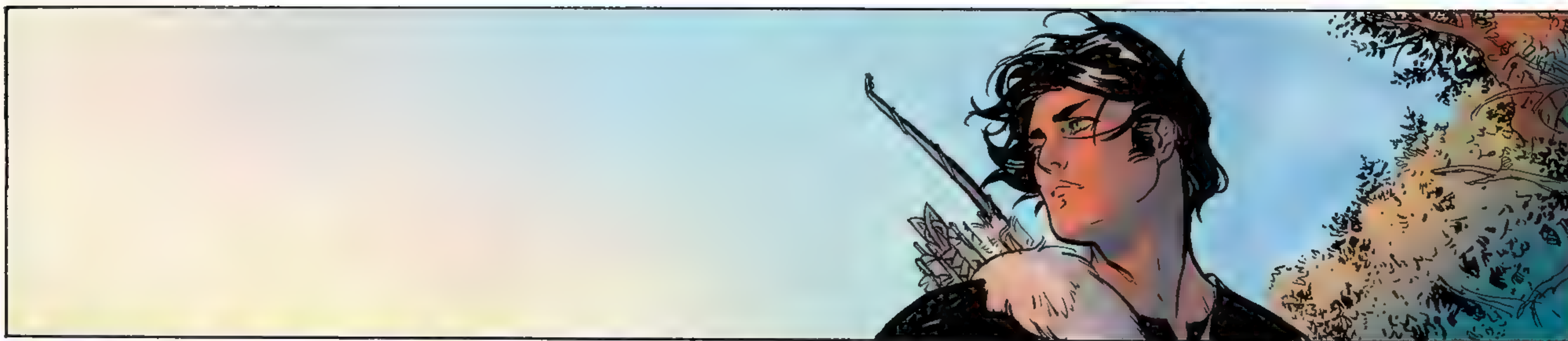
THE SUN IS ALREADY HIGH... DON'T YOU WANT TO WAIT ANOTHER DAY?

I'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH.



INGRATE!

HA, AND IT'LL BE JUST GREAT WHEN MIMÉ IS TURNED TO STONE BY THAT DREADFUL SUN.

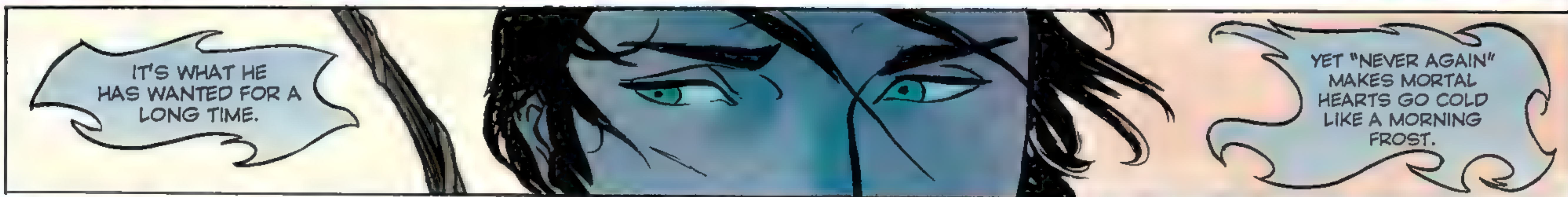


AND SINCE SIEGFRIED
WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE
THE GLADE WHERE HE HAD
BEEN SINCE HE WAS BORN
HE WAS THINKING ABOUT
WHAT HE WAS LEAVING
BEHIND HIM...

HE KNOWS THAT
WHATEVER HIS FUTURE,
WHETHER IT IS CARRIED OUT
WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE OR
BETWEEN THE JAWS
OF A DRAGON,
HE WILL NEVER SEE
THIS PLACE AGAIN.

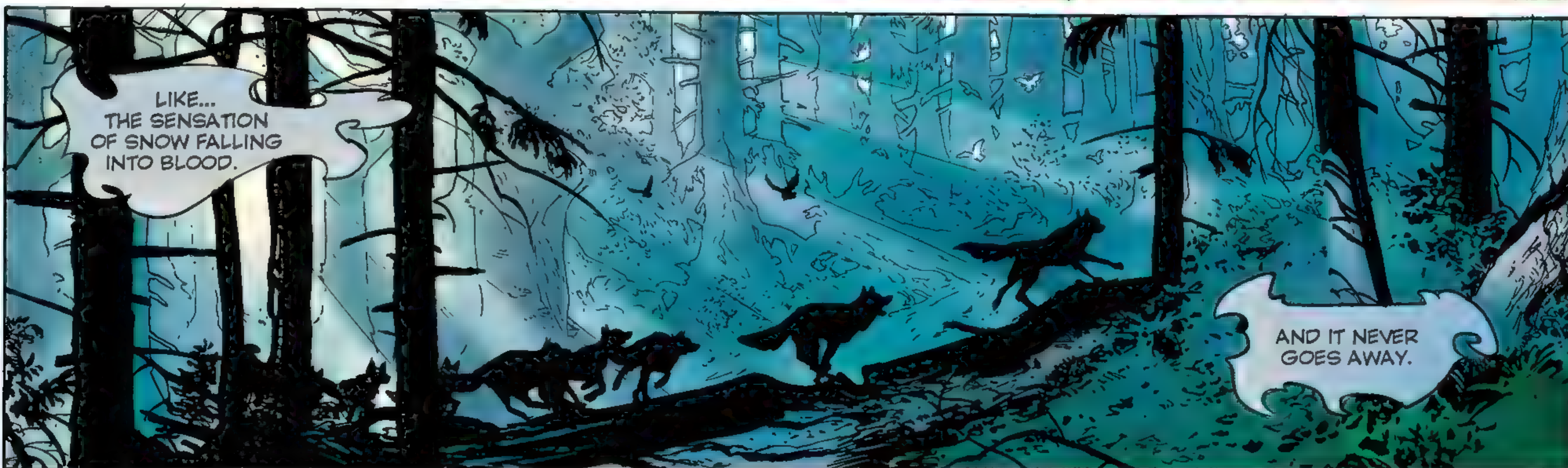
HIS CHILDHOOD.

...THE FORGE, THE WOLVES,
HUNTING, THE FOREST.



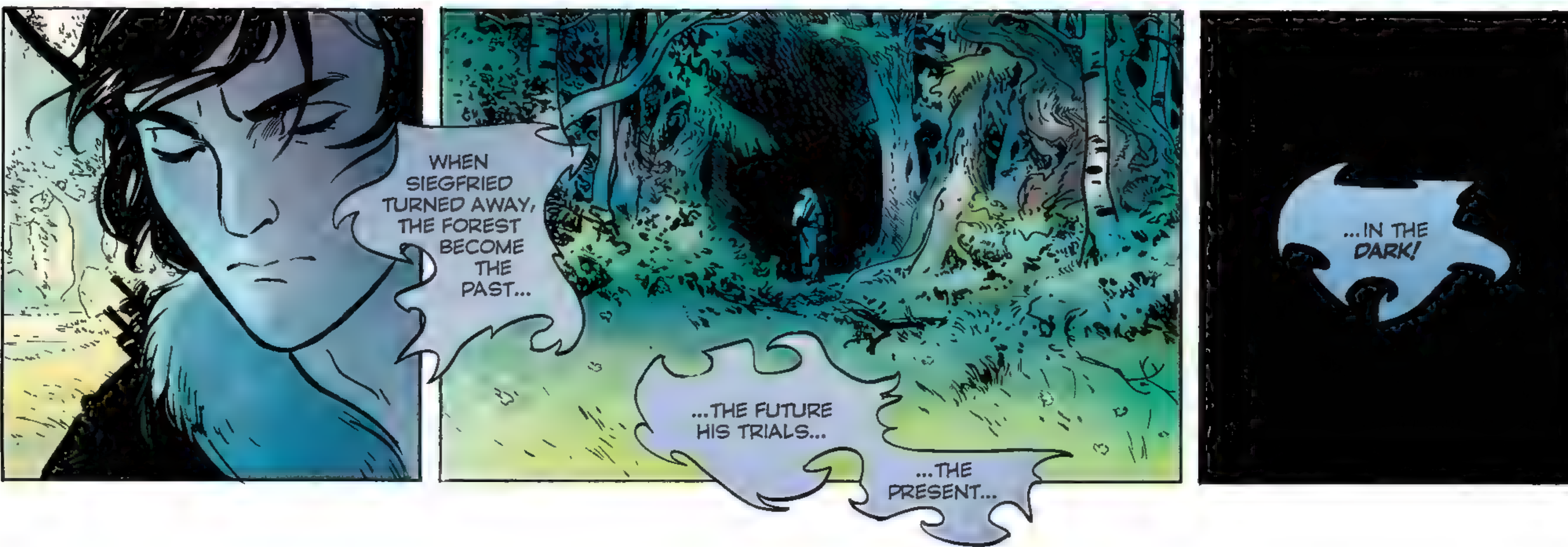
IT'S WHAT HE
HAS WANTED FOR A
LONG TIME.

YET "NEVER AGAIN"
MAKES MORTAL
HEARTS GO COLD
LIKE A MORNING
FROST.



LIKE...
THE SENSATION
OF SNOW FALLING
INTO BLOOD.

AND IT NEVER
GOES AWAY.

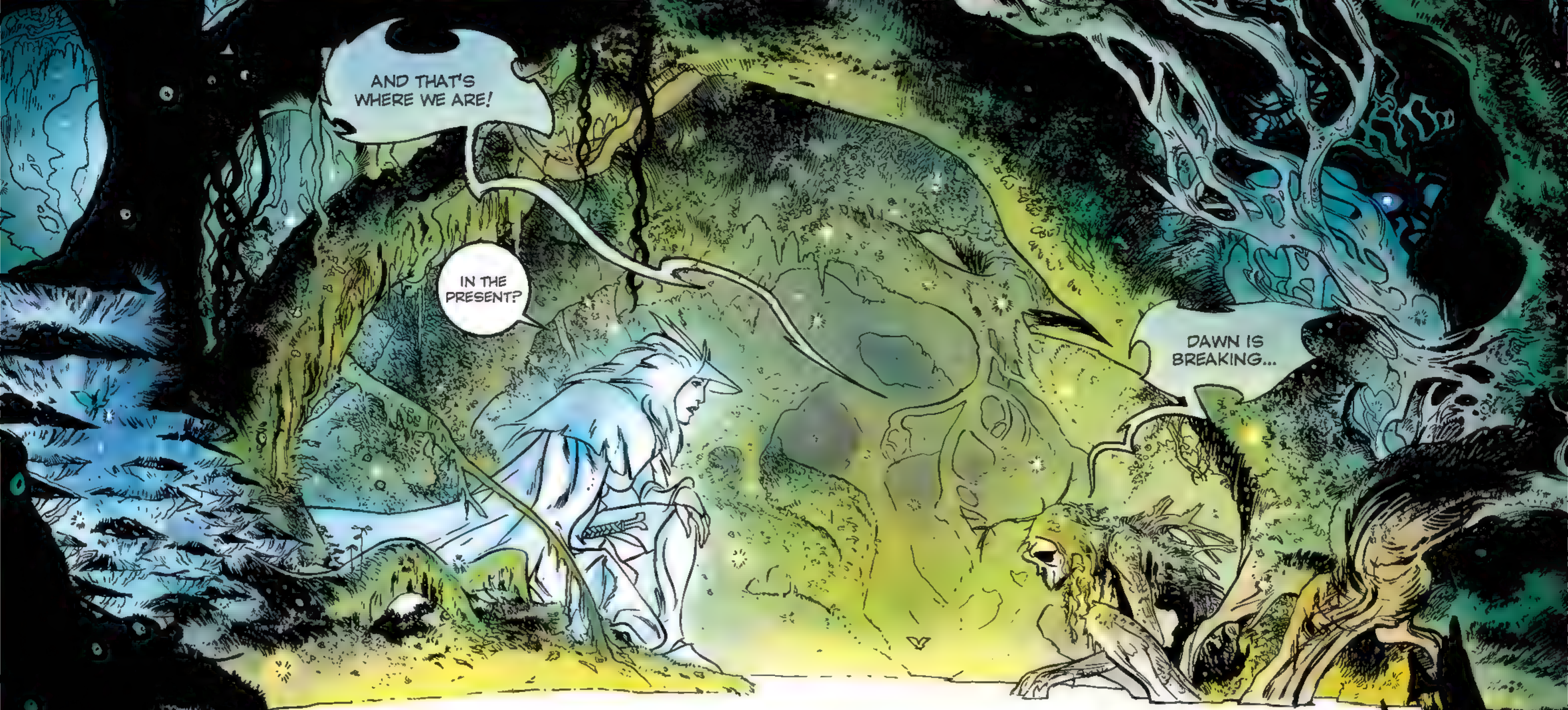


WHEN
SIEGFRIED
TURNED AWAY,
THE FOREST
BECAME
THE
PAST...

...THE FUTURE
HIS TRIALS...

...THE
PRESENT...

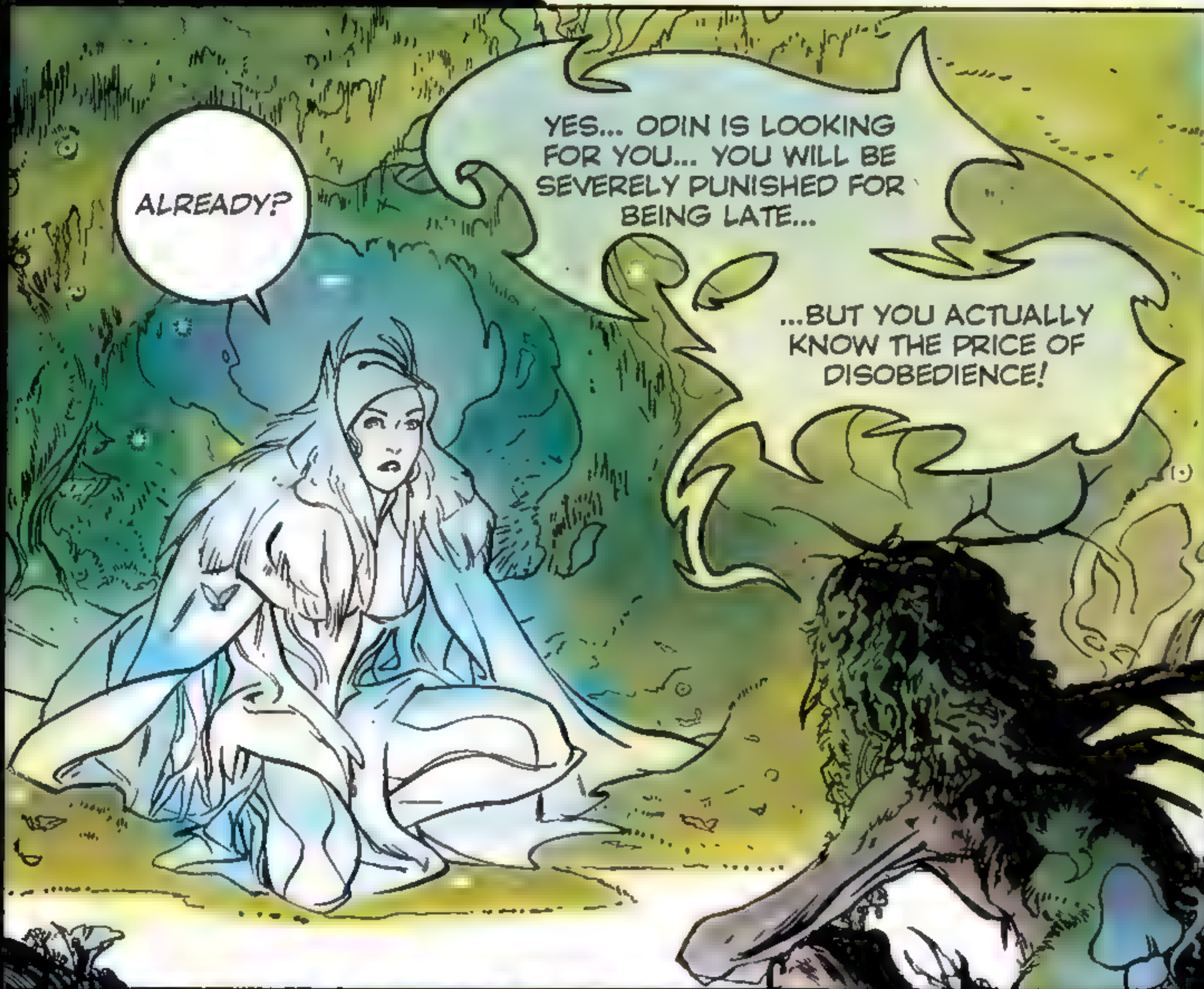
...IN THE
DARK!



AND THAT'S
WHERE WE ARE!

IN THE
PRESENT?

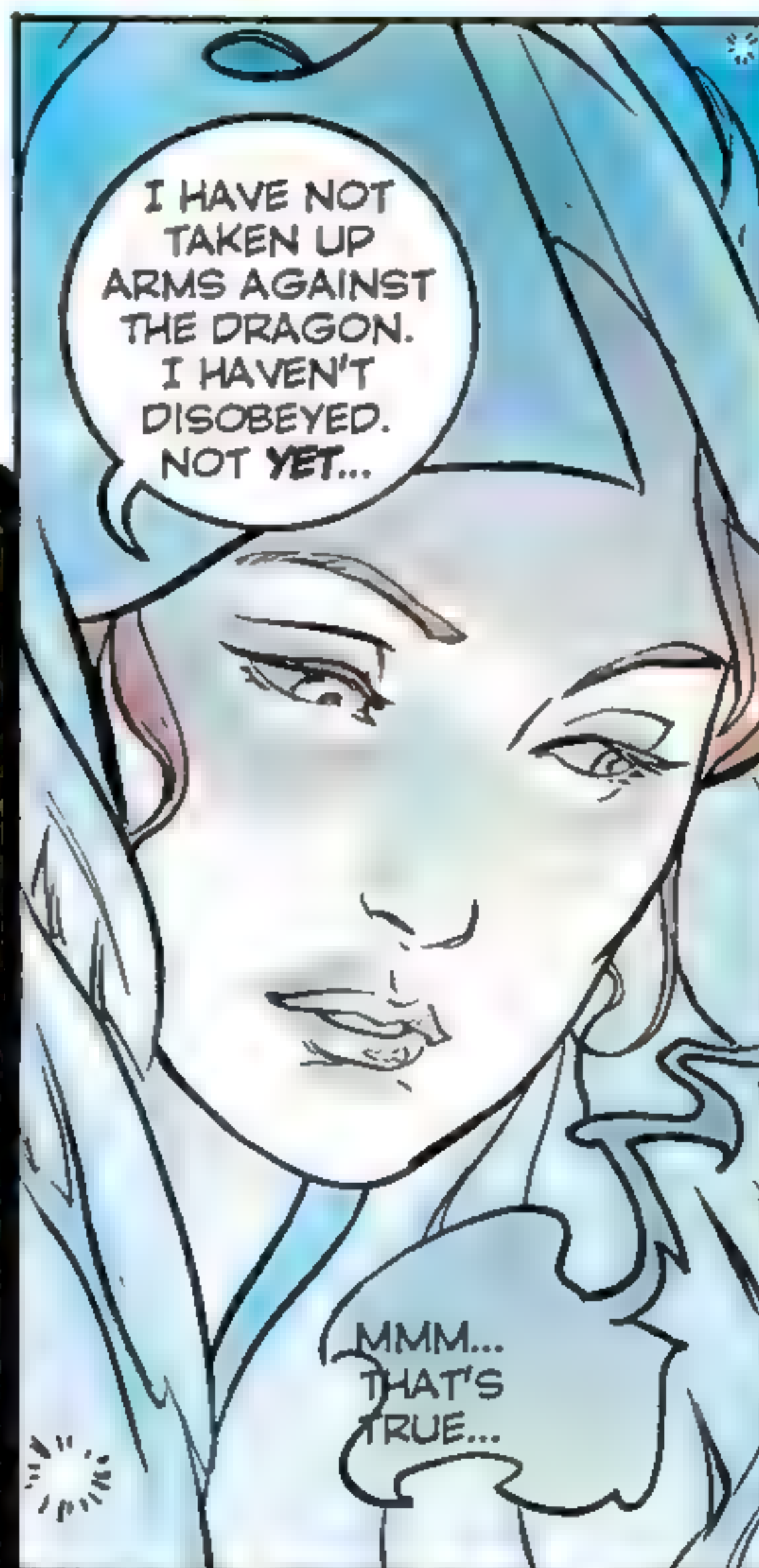
DAWN IS
BREAKING...



ALREADY?

YES... ODIN IS LOOKING
FOR YOU... YOU WILL BE
SEVERELY PUNISHED FOR
BEING LATE...

...BUT YOU ACTUALLY
KNOW THE PRICE OF
DISOBEDIENCE!



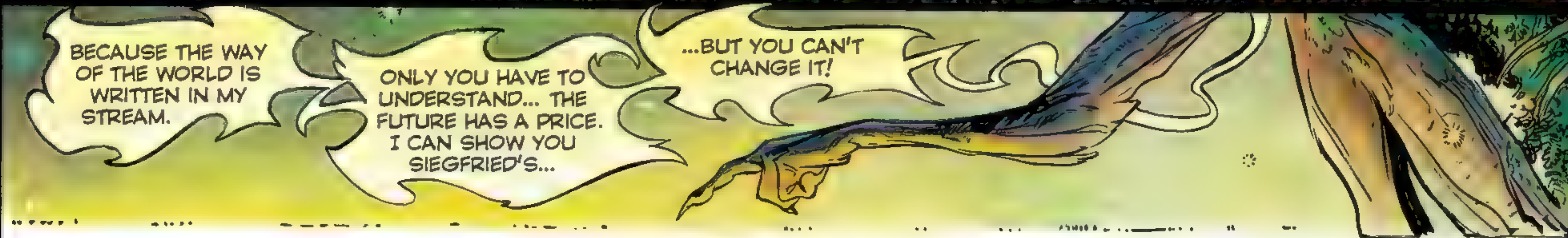
I HAVE NOT
TAKEN UP
ARMS AGAINST
THE DRAGON.
I HAVEN'T
DISOBEYED.
NOT YET...

MMM...
THAT'S
TRUE...



YOU WANT TO BE
SURE THAT SIEGFRIED
FAILS FIRST... THAT'S
PRECISELY WHAT I
CAN DO FOR YOU...

...I ASSURE
YOU.



BECAUSE THE WAY
OF THE WORLD IS
WRITTEN IN MY
STREAM.

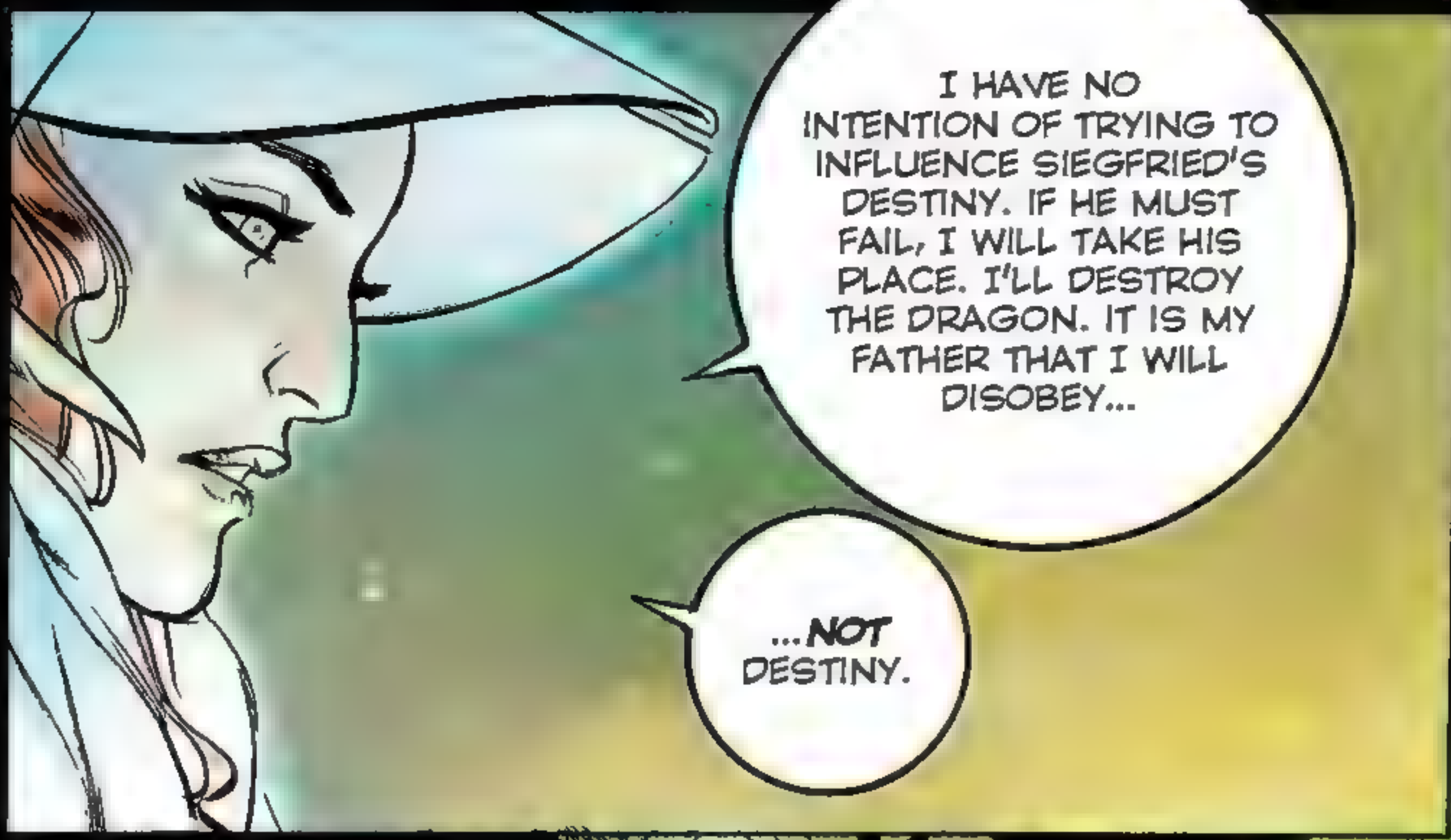
ONLY YOU HAVE TO
UNDERSTAND... THE
FUTURE HAS A PRICE.
I CAN SHOW YOU
SIEGFRIED'S...

...BUT YOU CAN'T
CHANGE IT!



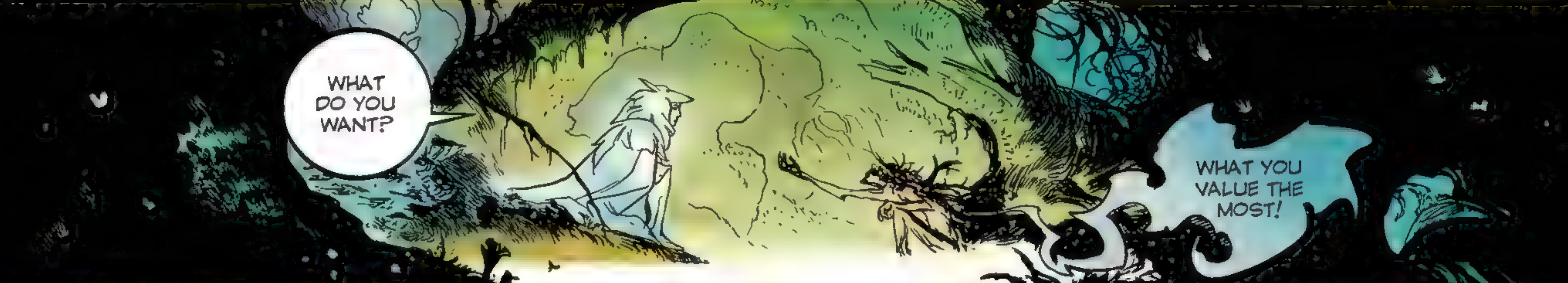
YOU WILL BE
POWERLESS,
VALKYRIE.

THAT IS THE PRICE
OF CERTAINTY.



I HAVE NO INTENTION OF TRYING TO INFLUENCE SIEGFRIED'S DESTINY. IF HE MUST FAIL, I WILL TAKE HIS PLACE. I'LL DESTROY THE DRAGON. IT IS MY FATHER THAT I WILL DISOBEY...

...NOT DESTINY.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WHAT YOU VALUE THE MOST!



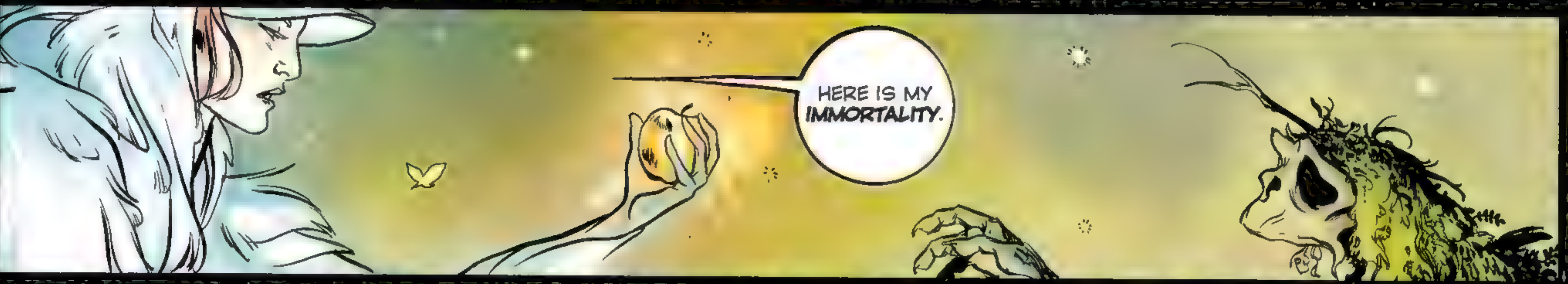
I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY YOU KNOW... I NEED A SIGN OF YOUR WORD!

YOU DOUBT ME?

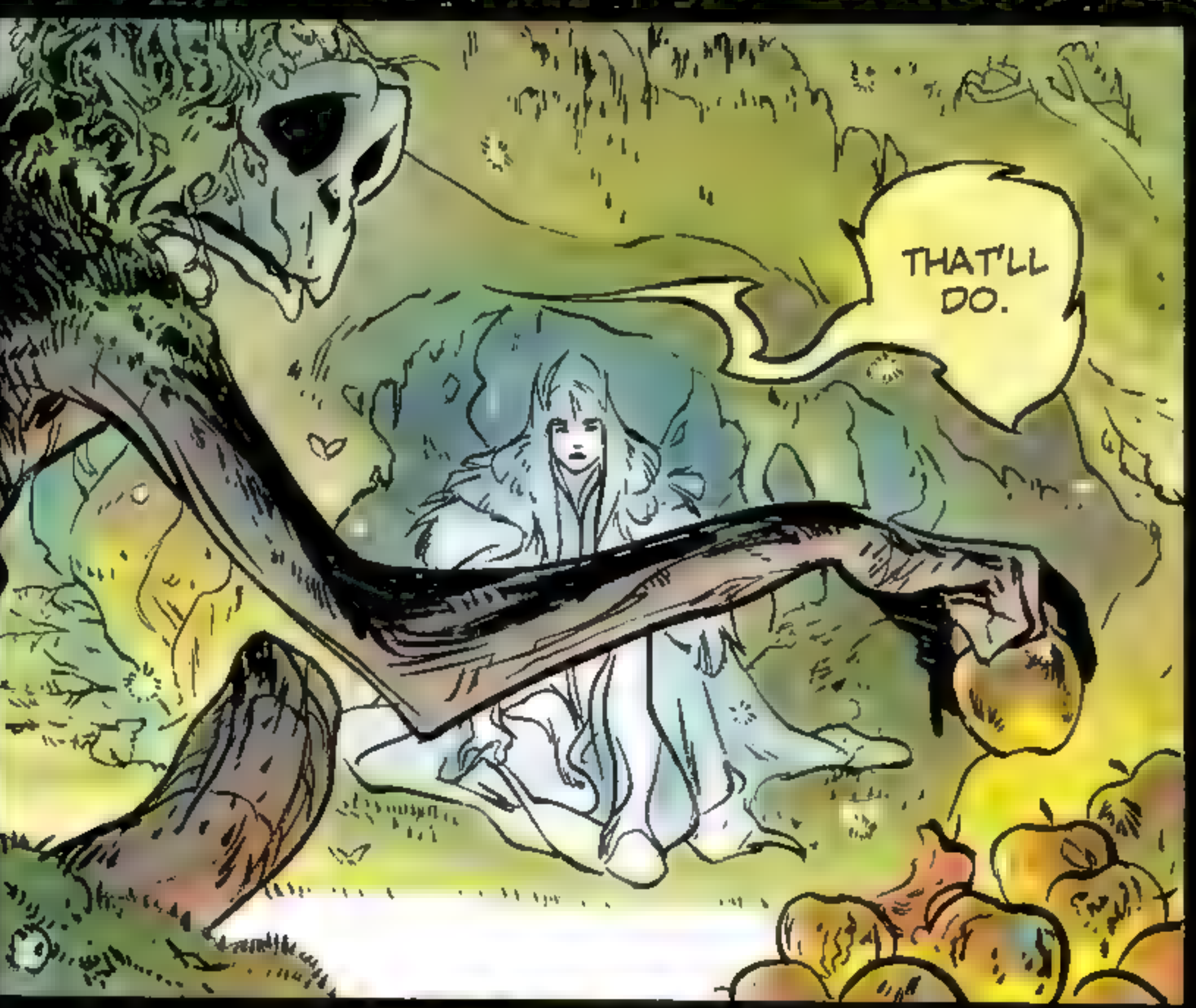


DOUBT, MY DEAR, IS THE GODS' ONLY LUXURY WHICH I ENVY.

NOW... DO YOU WANT TO SEE SIEGFRIED'S DESTINY OR NOT?



HERE IS MY IMMORTALITY.



THAT'LL DO.



NOW, WHERE WERE WE?



AH YES...

...AS ALWAYS...



...IN THE DARK!

THIS FOG!
HOW CAN YOU
FIND YOUR WAY
THROUGH THIS?
WE CAN HARDLY
SEE OUR OWN
TRACKS.

YOU DON'T
SENSE
ANYTHING,
OBVIOUSLY.

COPPER, IRON,
PLATINUM,
THE VEINS ARE
EVERYWHERE
BENEATH OUR
FEET!

ALL YOU HAVE
TO DO IS
FOLLOW THEM.

NIBELUNGS CAN
SENSE THOSE
THINGS, THAT IS
WHY MIMÉ HAS
ALREADY BEEN
THIS FAR...

...LOTS
OF GOOD
METAL!

A GIANT DIED HERE
LONG AGO, THE METAL
VEINS ARE HIS BONES,
THE FOREST IS HIS
ROTTING SKIN.

IT'S A
BAD
PLACE!

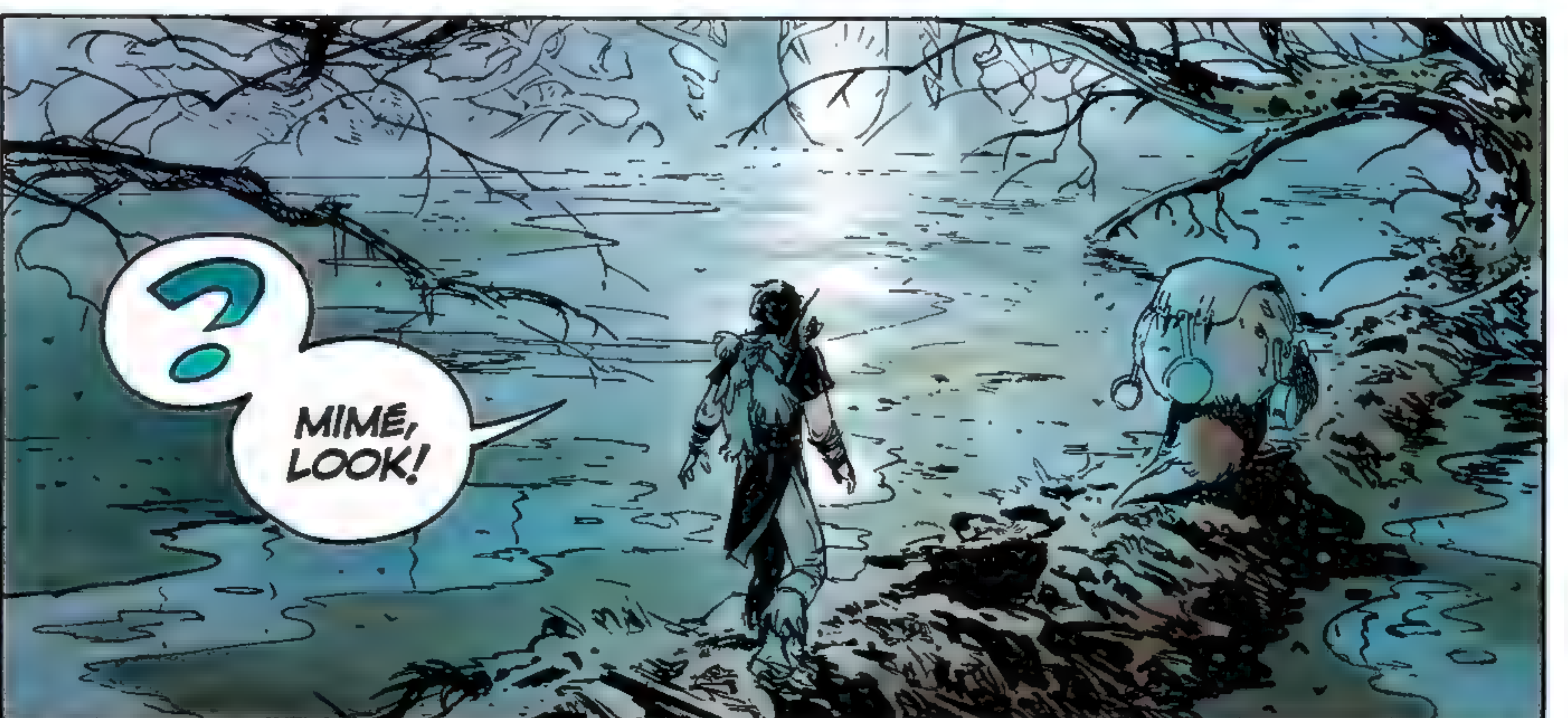
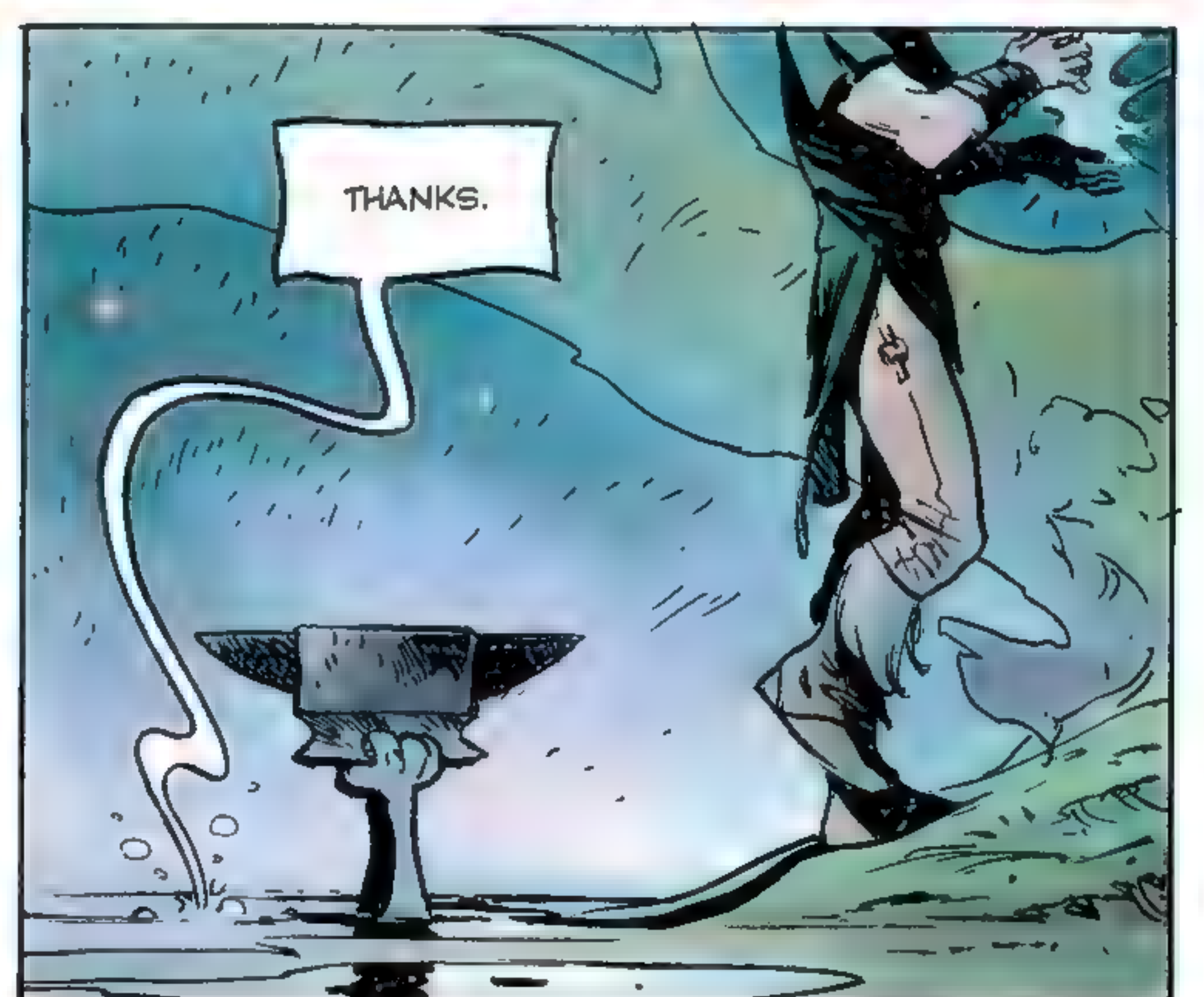
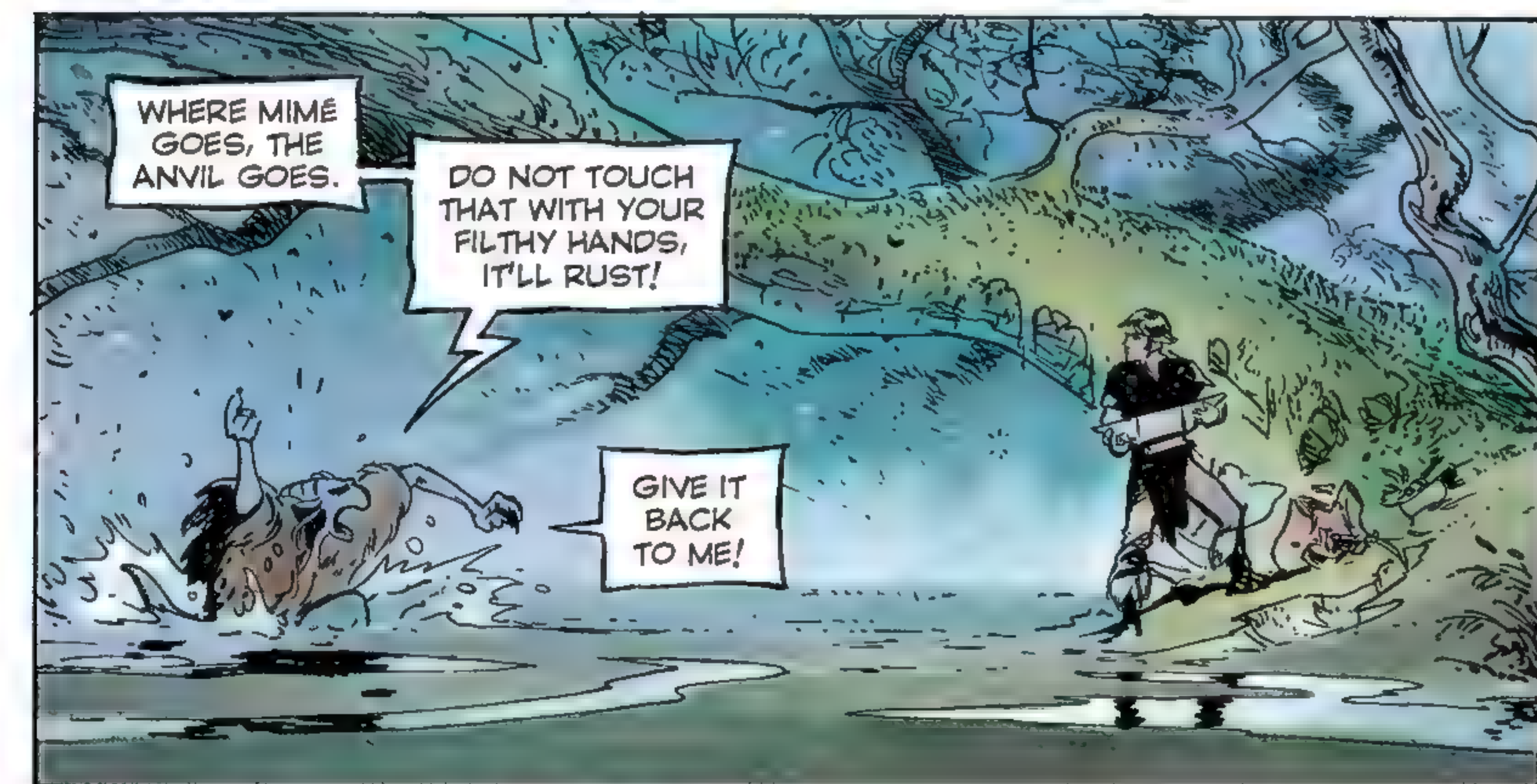
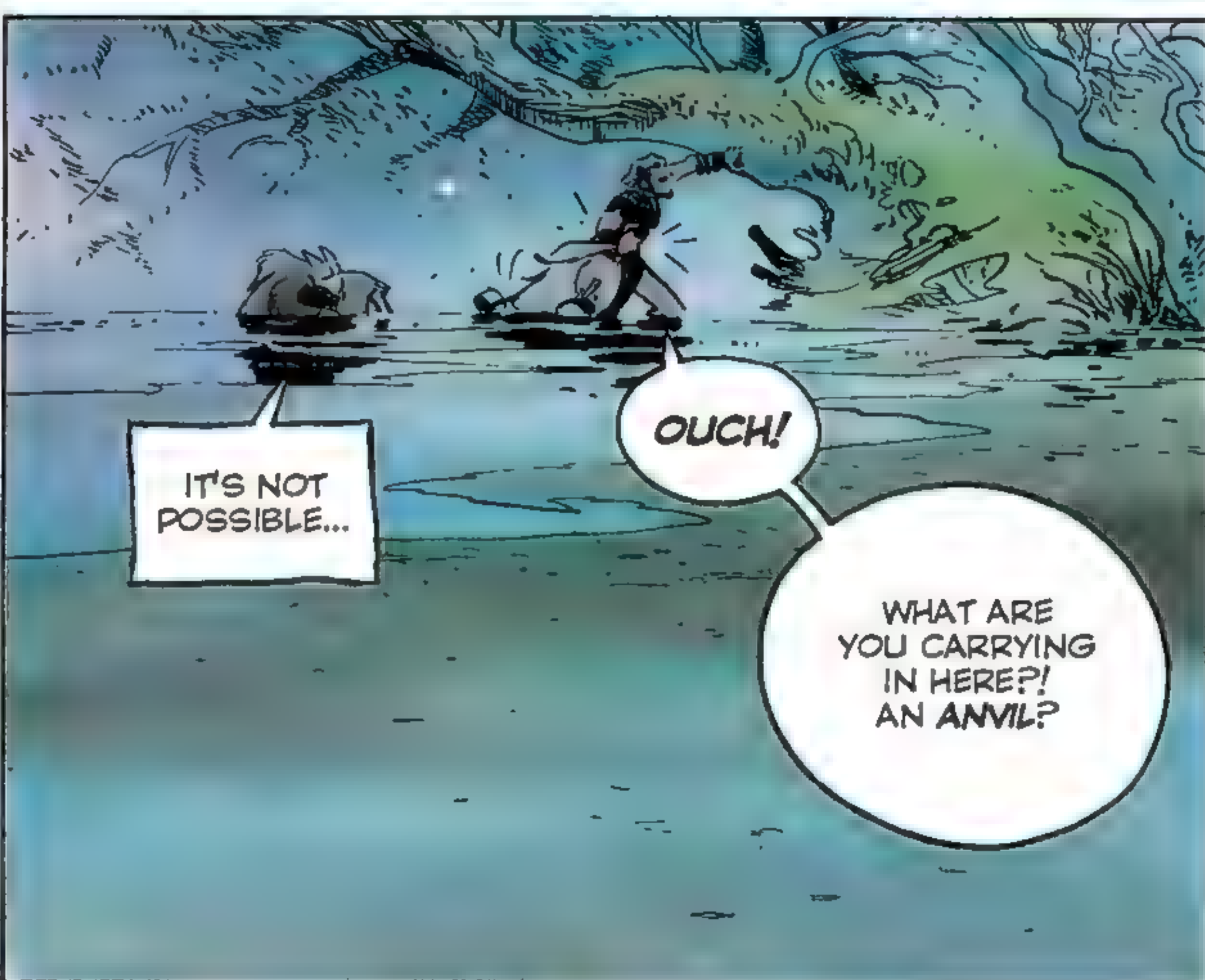
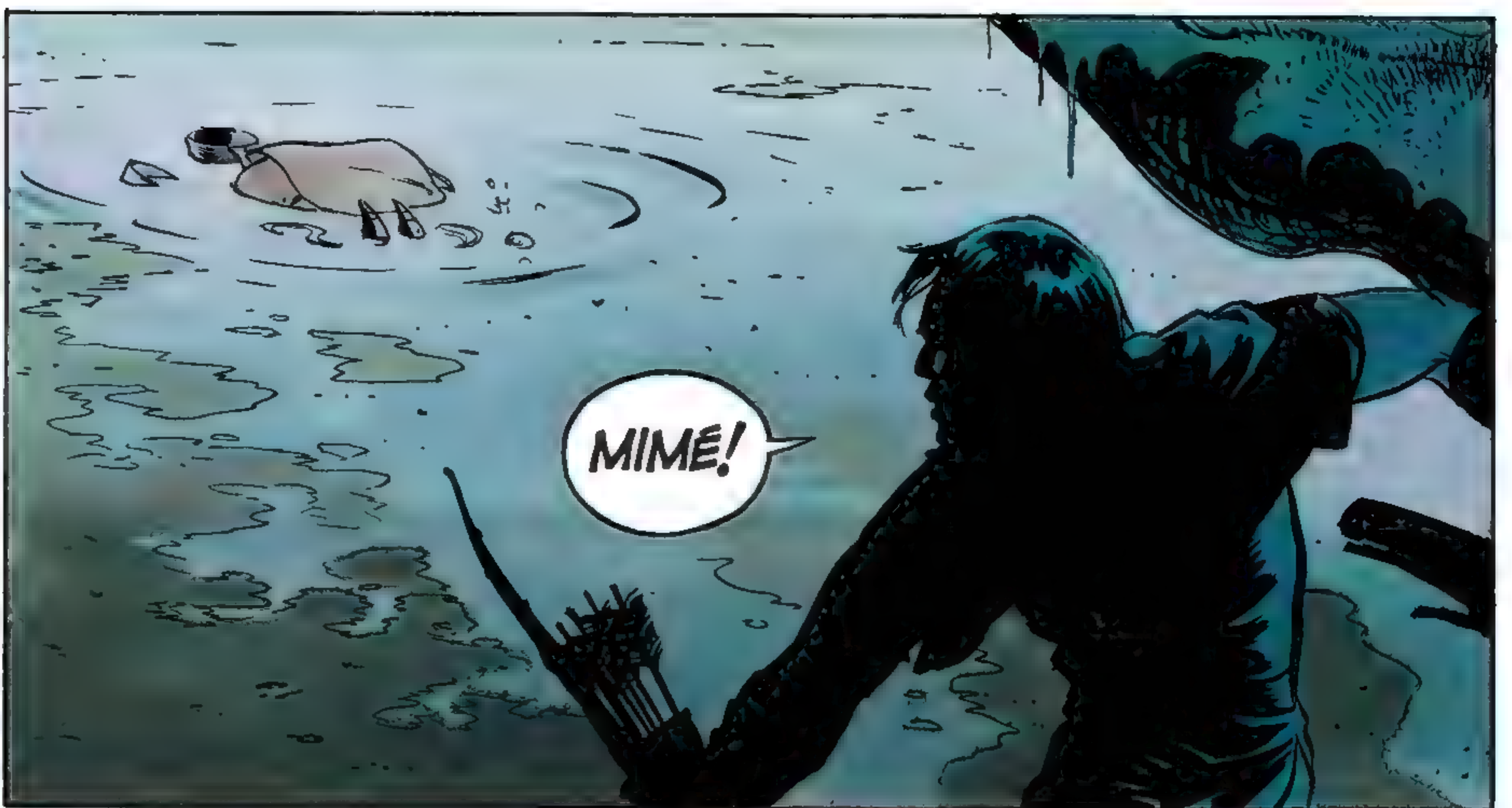
AND WE ARE
NOWHERE NEAR
THE END OF IT,
FOLLOW MIMÉ'S
TRAIL.

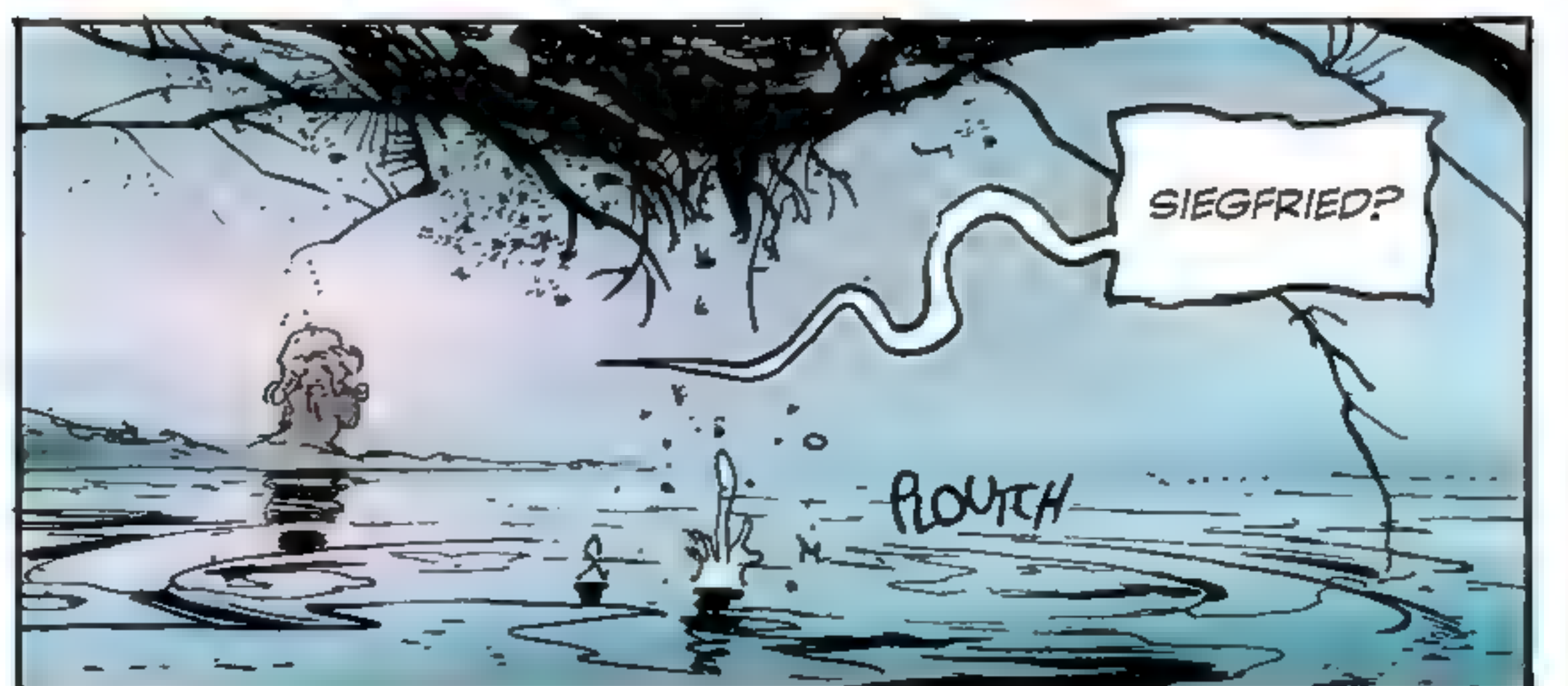
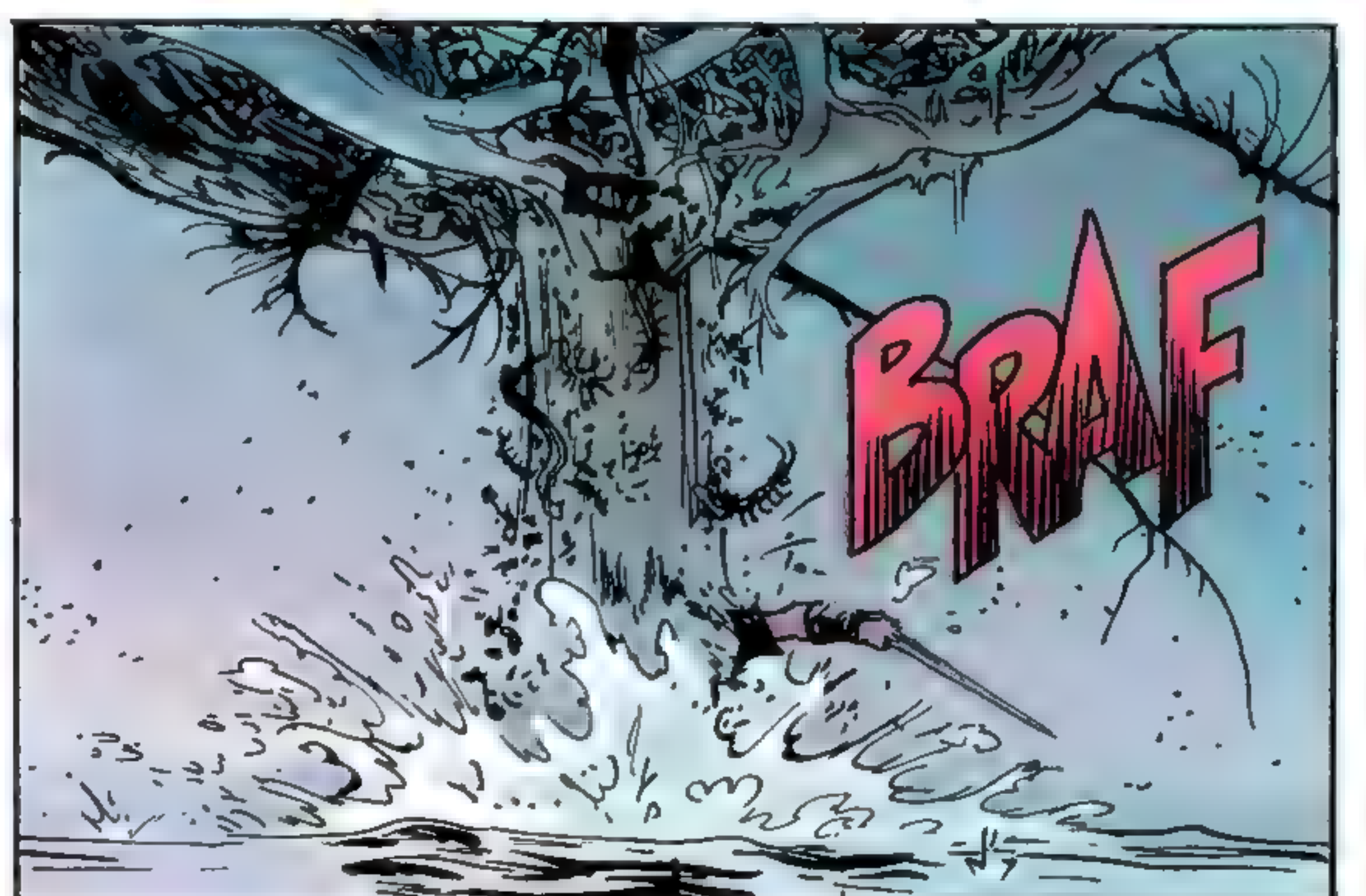
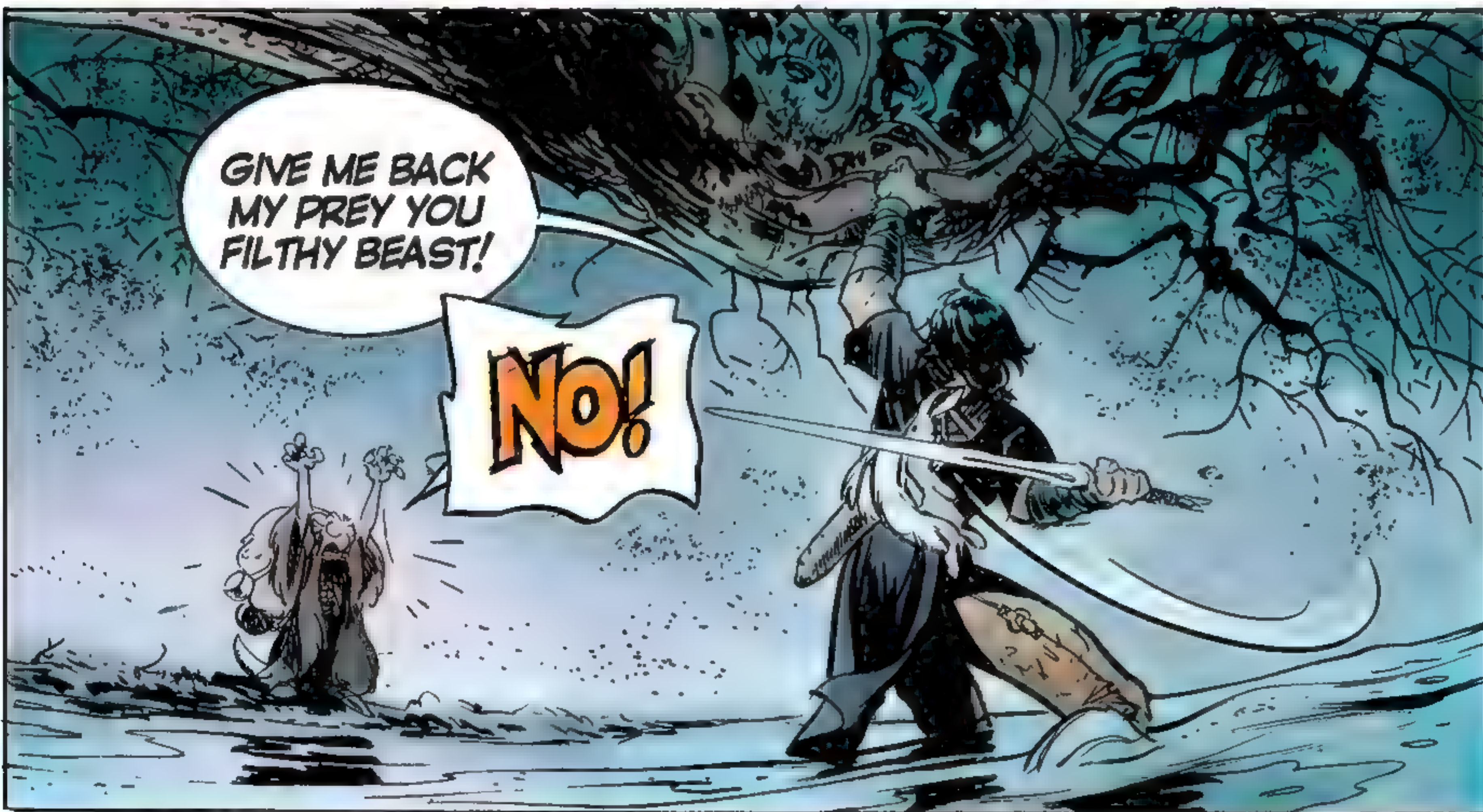
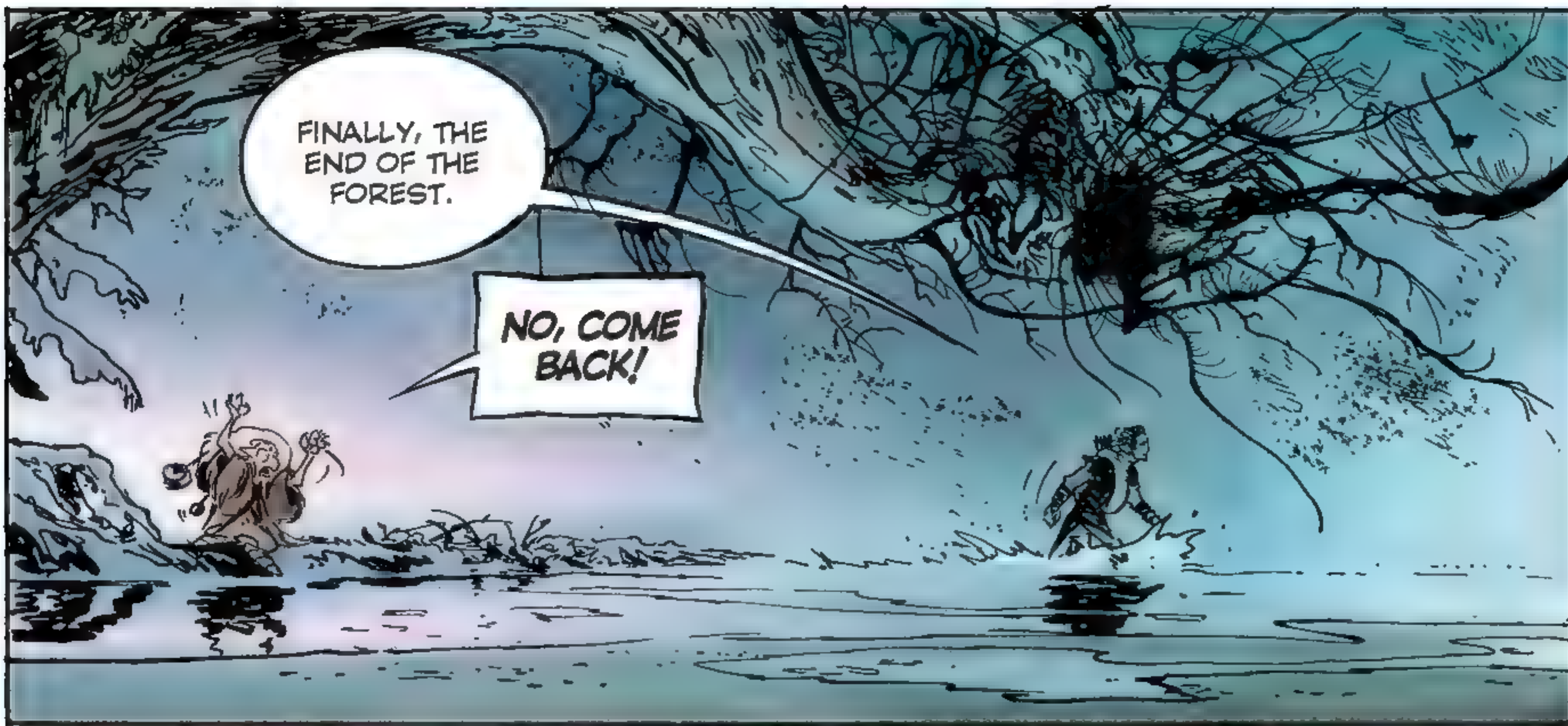
?!
SPLOCH!

THIS BOG,
DID YOU
ANTICIPATE
THIS?

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
IT SHOULDN'T
BE HERE!

A DEAD
GIANT CAN'T
MOVE!

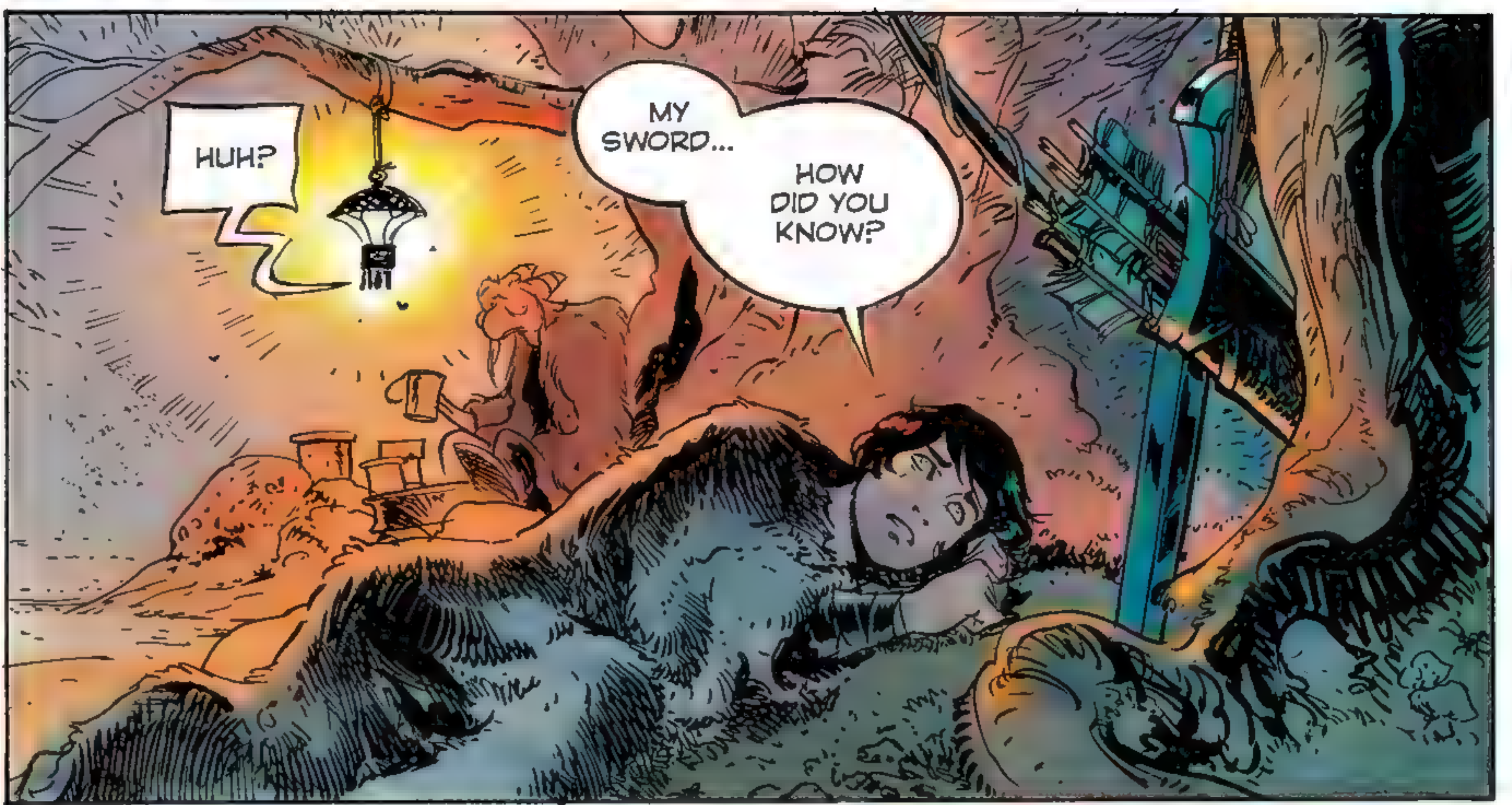






BROKEN
BY A
SPEAR...

...ISN'T
THAT
WHAT YOU
SAID?



HUH?

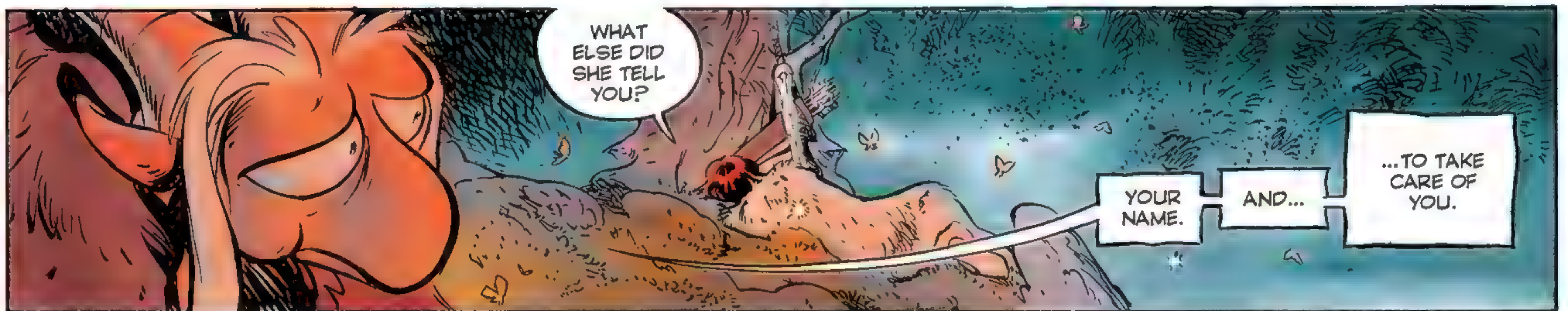
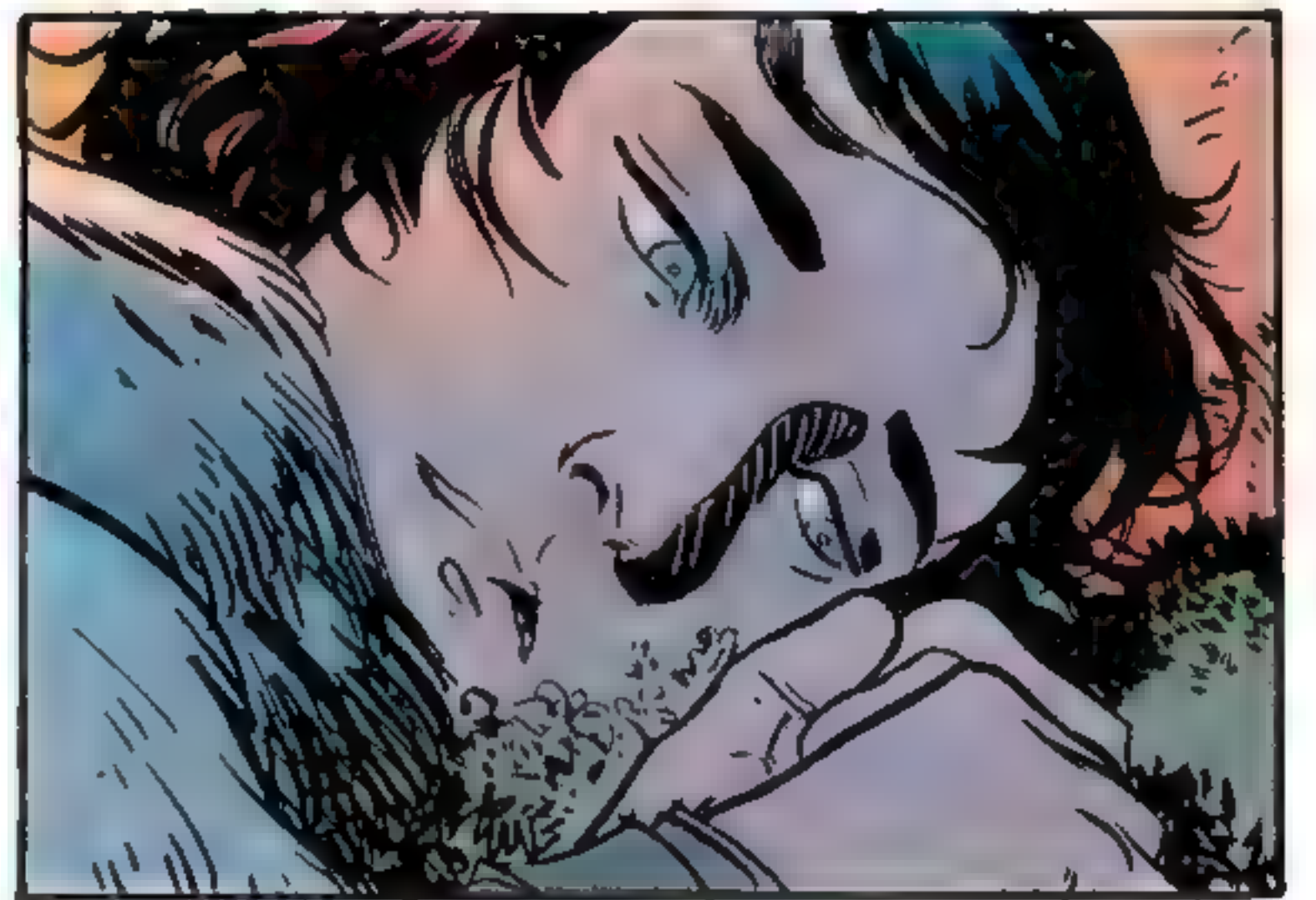
MY
SWORD...

HOW
DID YOU
KNOW?



YOUR
MOTHER
TOLD MIMÉ
JUST
BEFORE...

...JUST
BEFORE.



WHAT
ELSE DID
SHE TELL
YOU?

YOUR
NAME.

AND...

...TO TAKE
CARE OF
YOU.



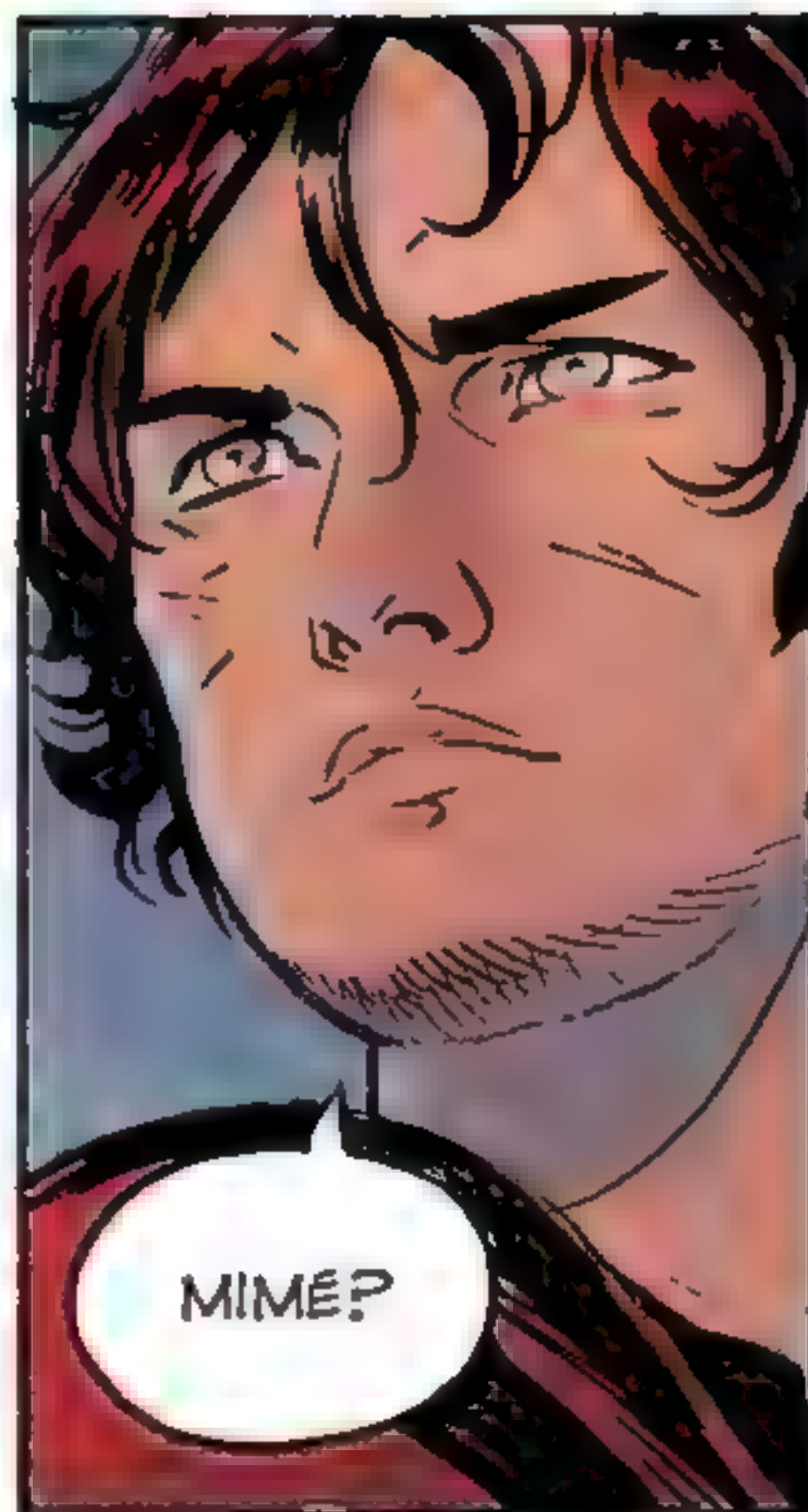
THAT'S
ALL?!

WHO
WIELDED THE
SPEAR?

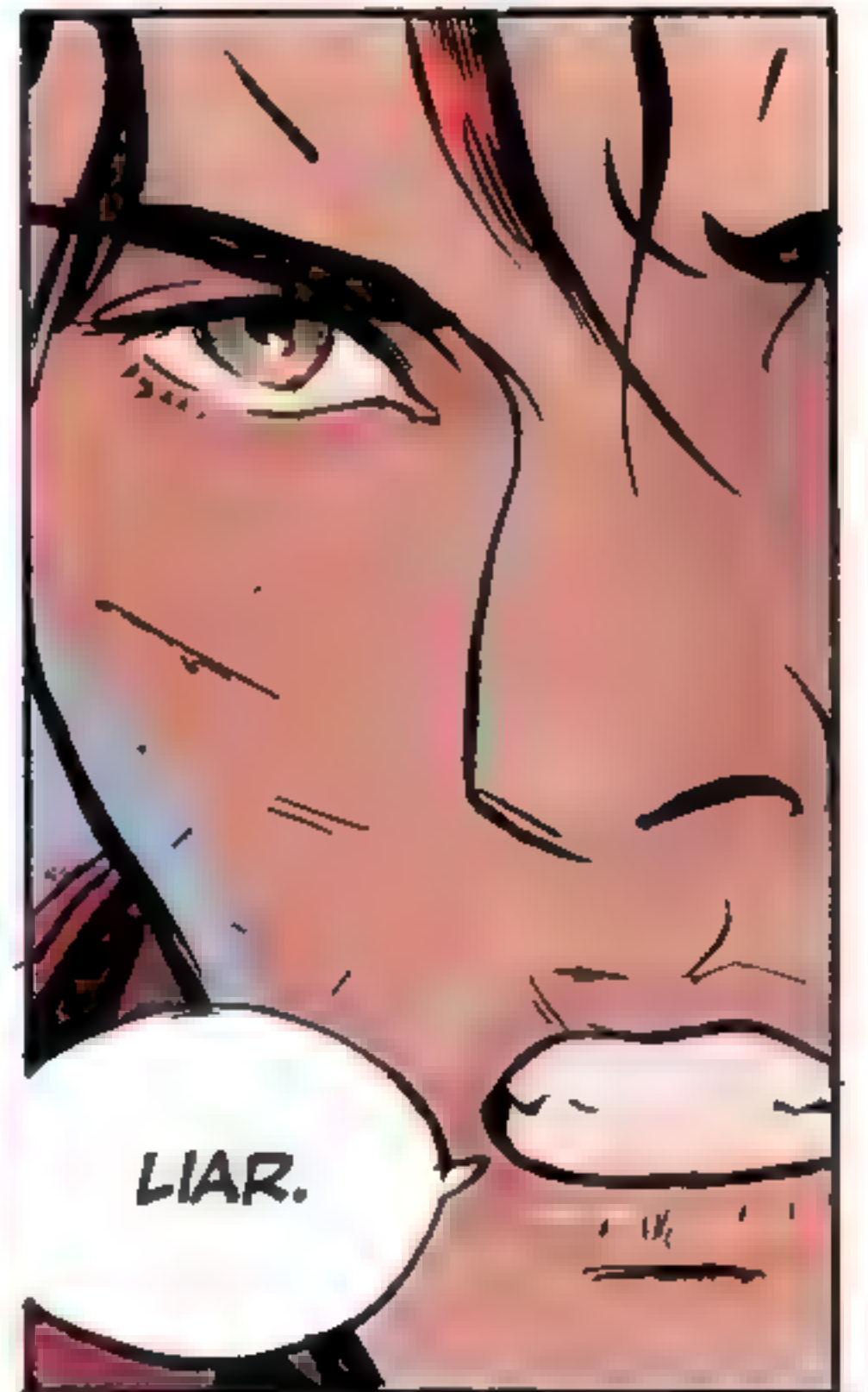
SHE
DIDN'T
SAY.



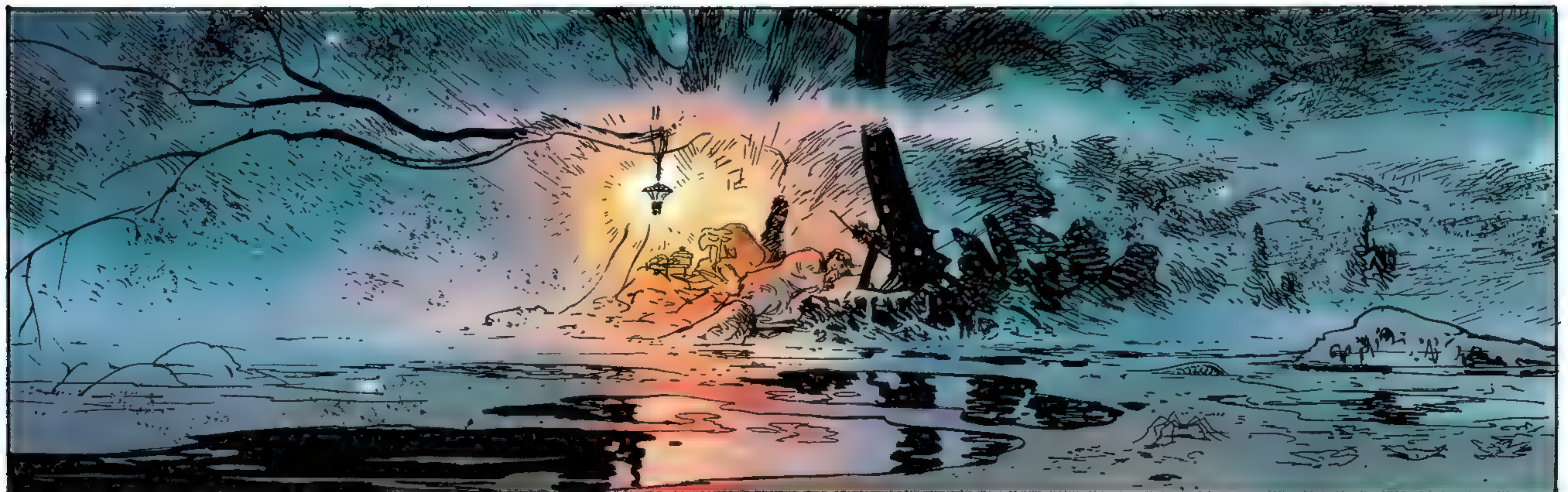
AND YOU
HAVE NO
IDEA?

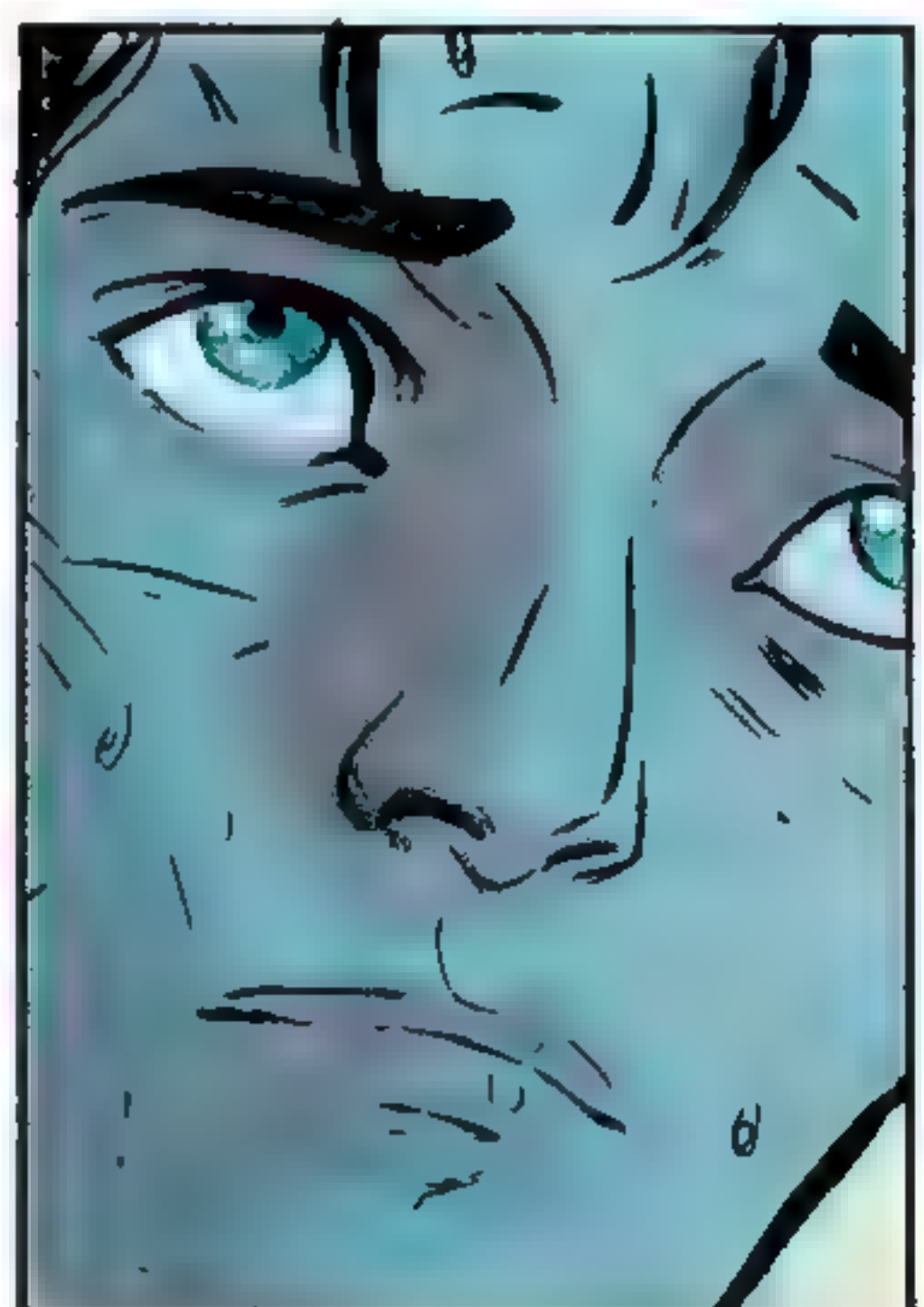
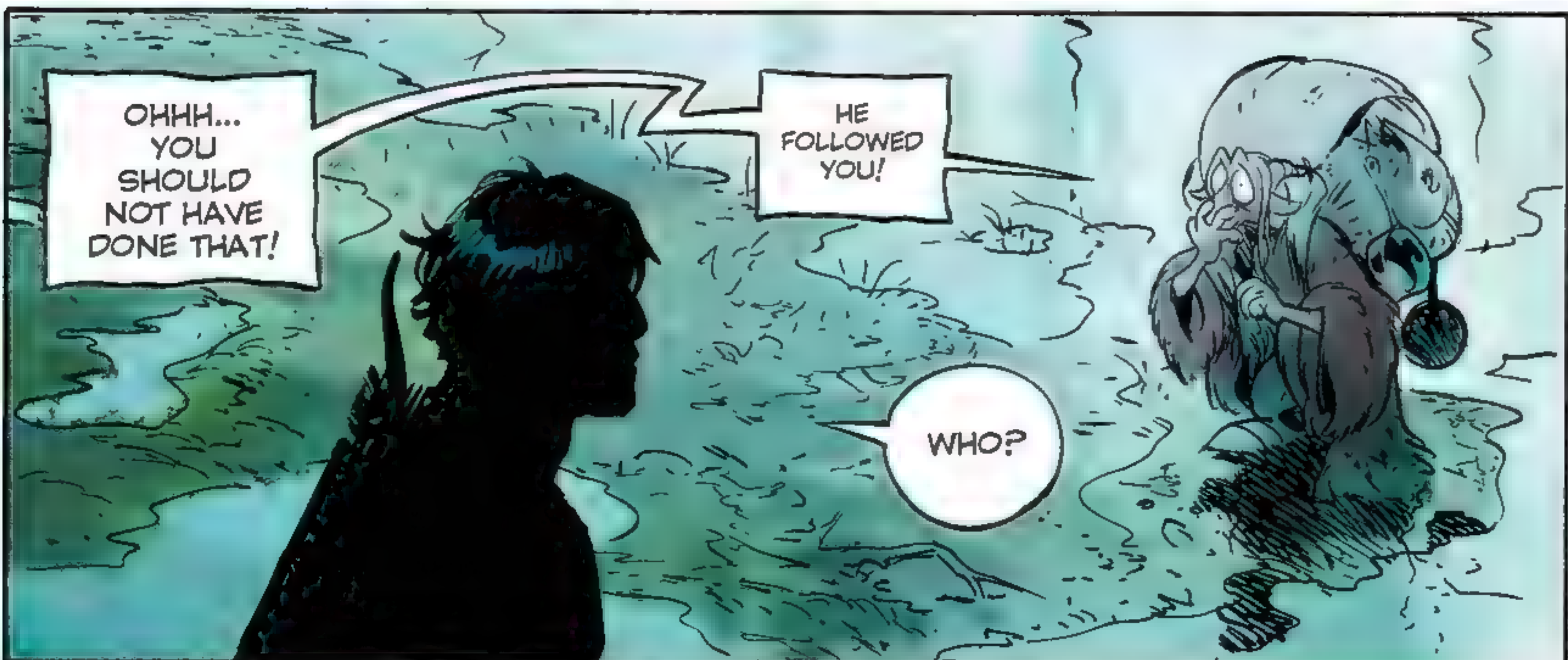
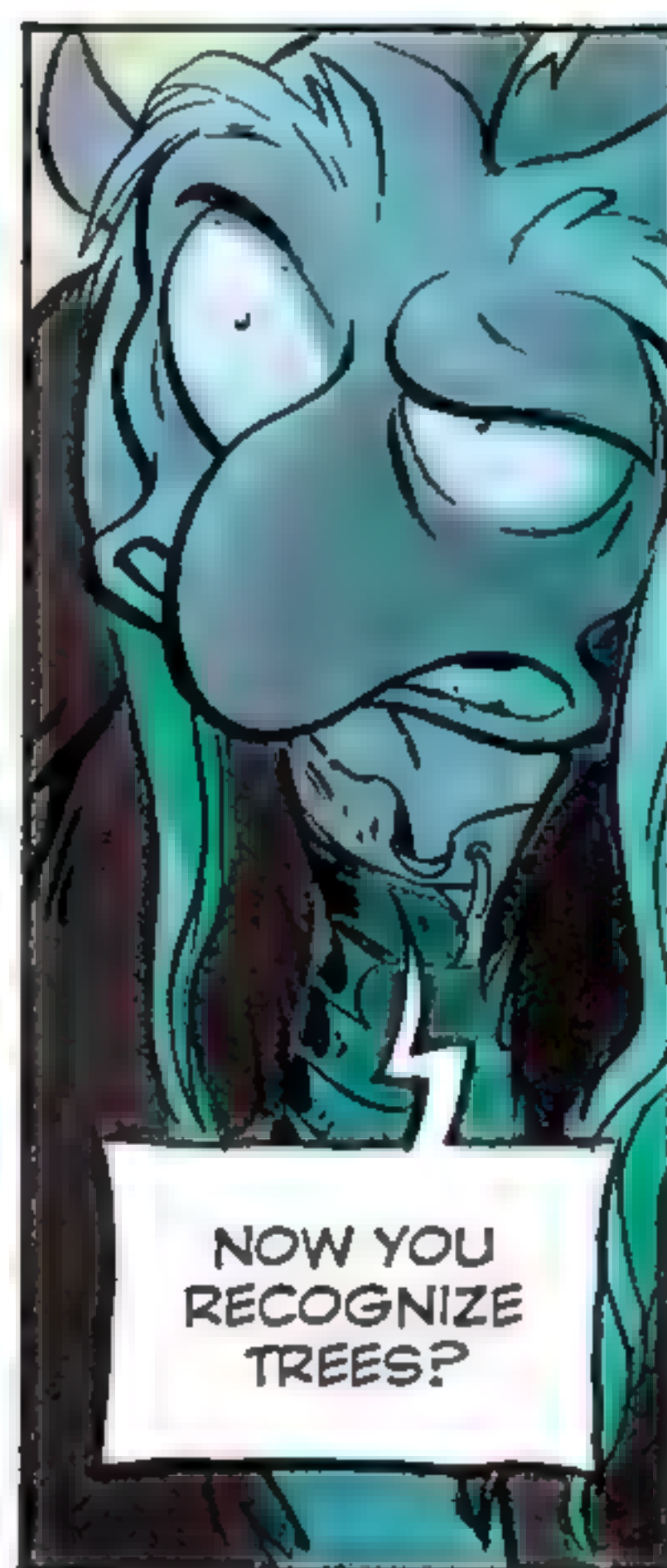
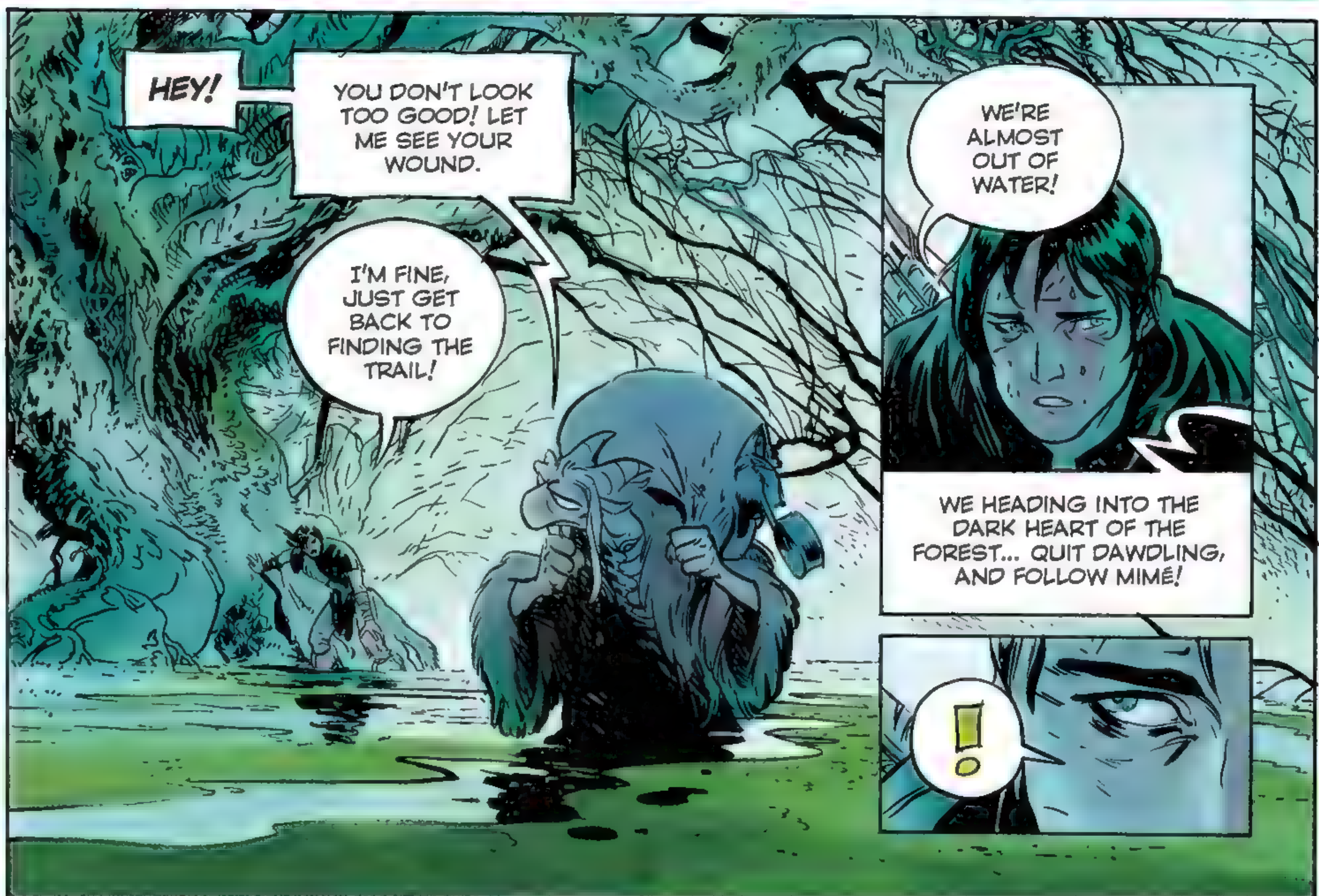
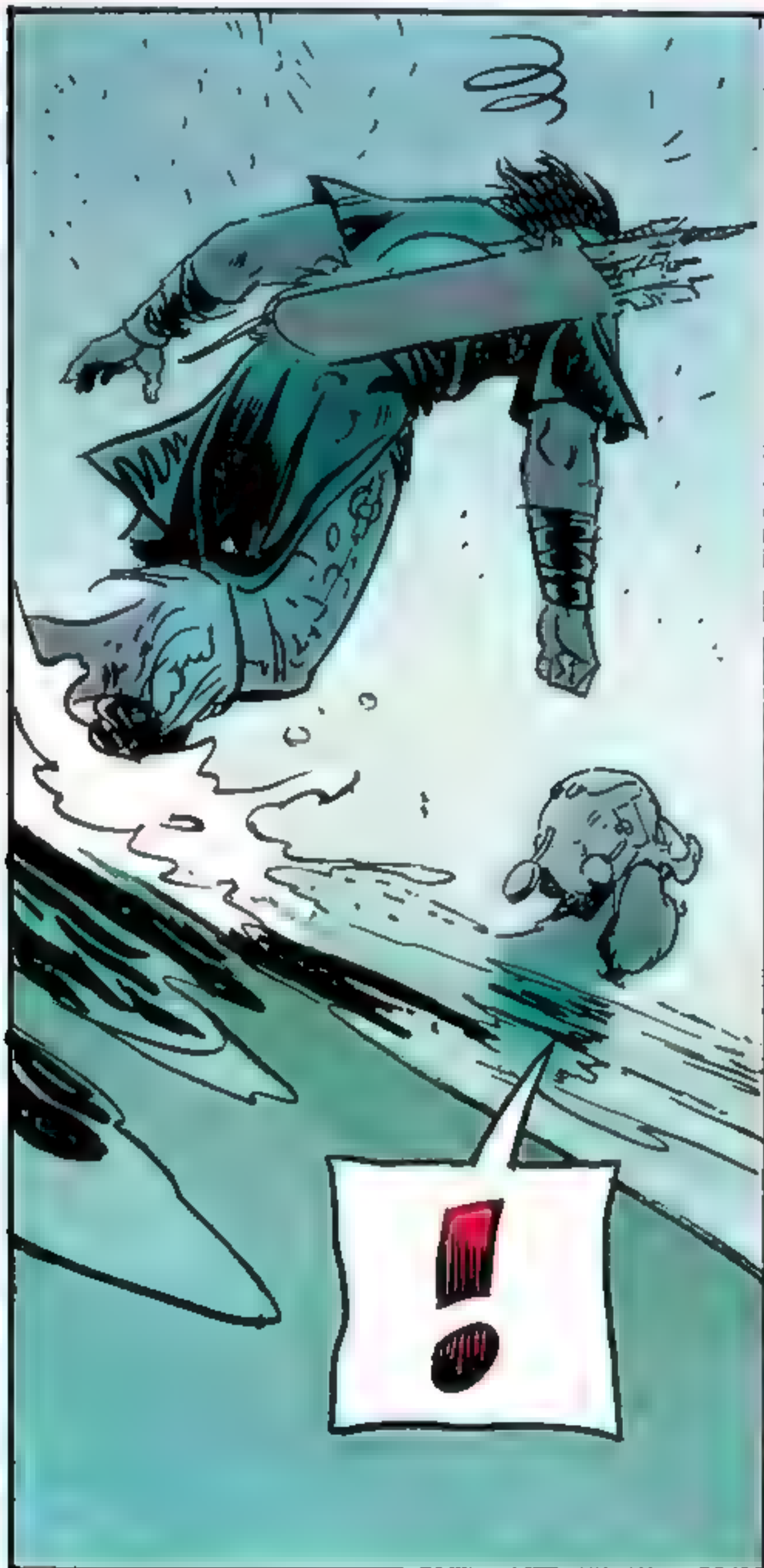
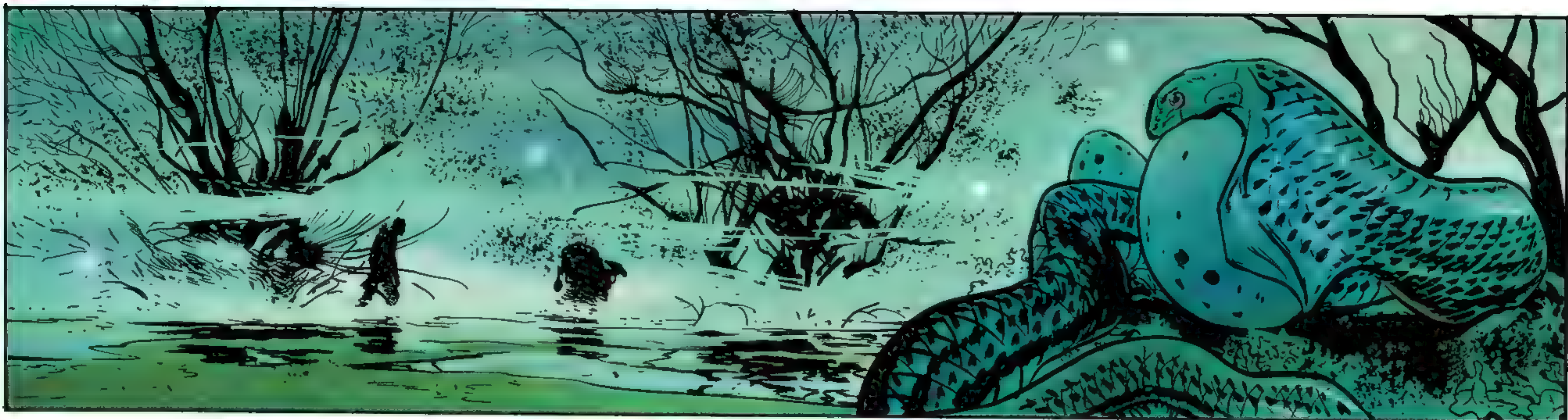


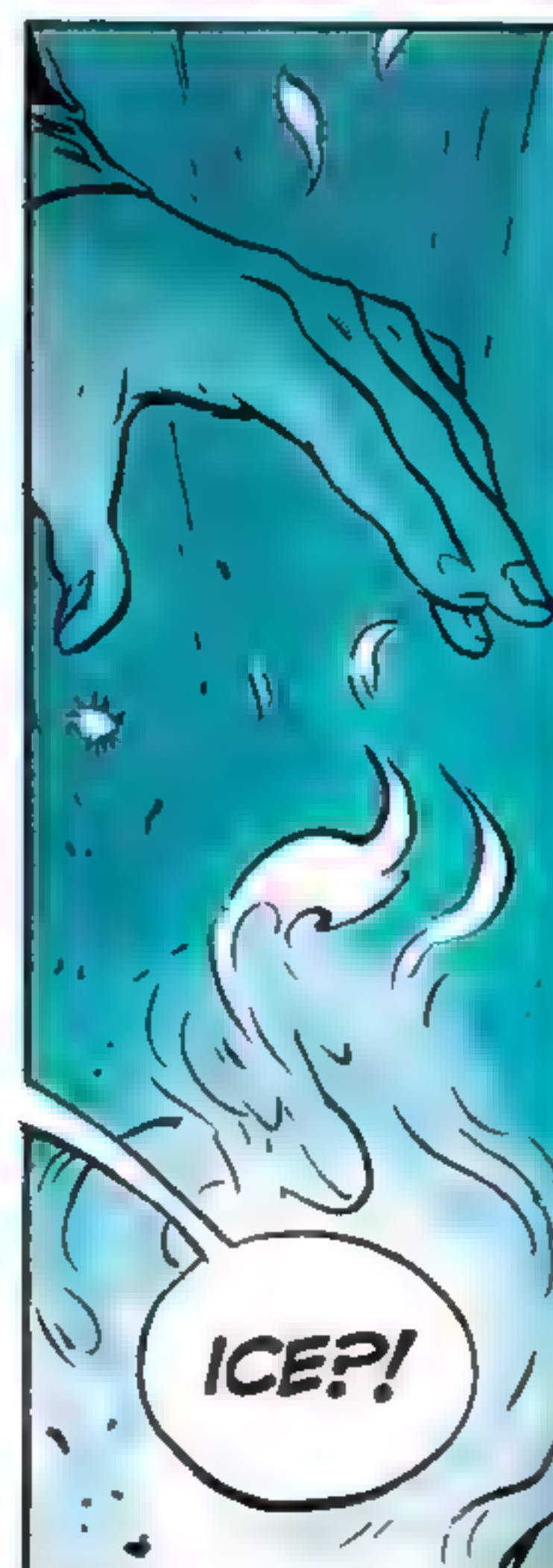
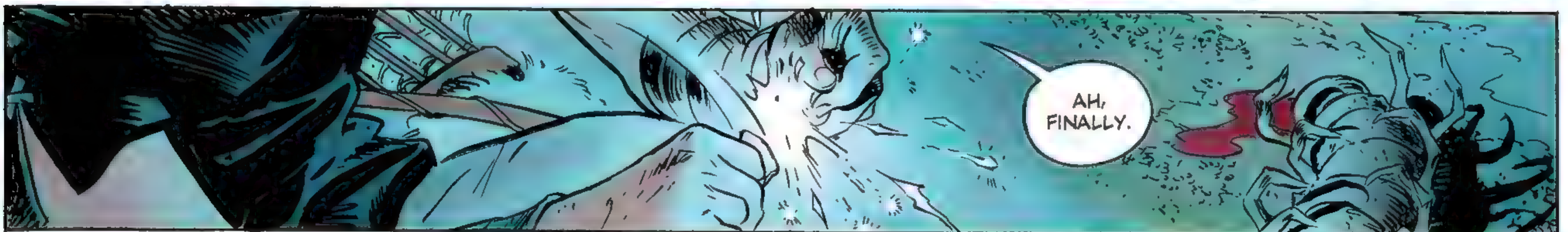
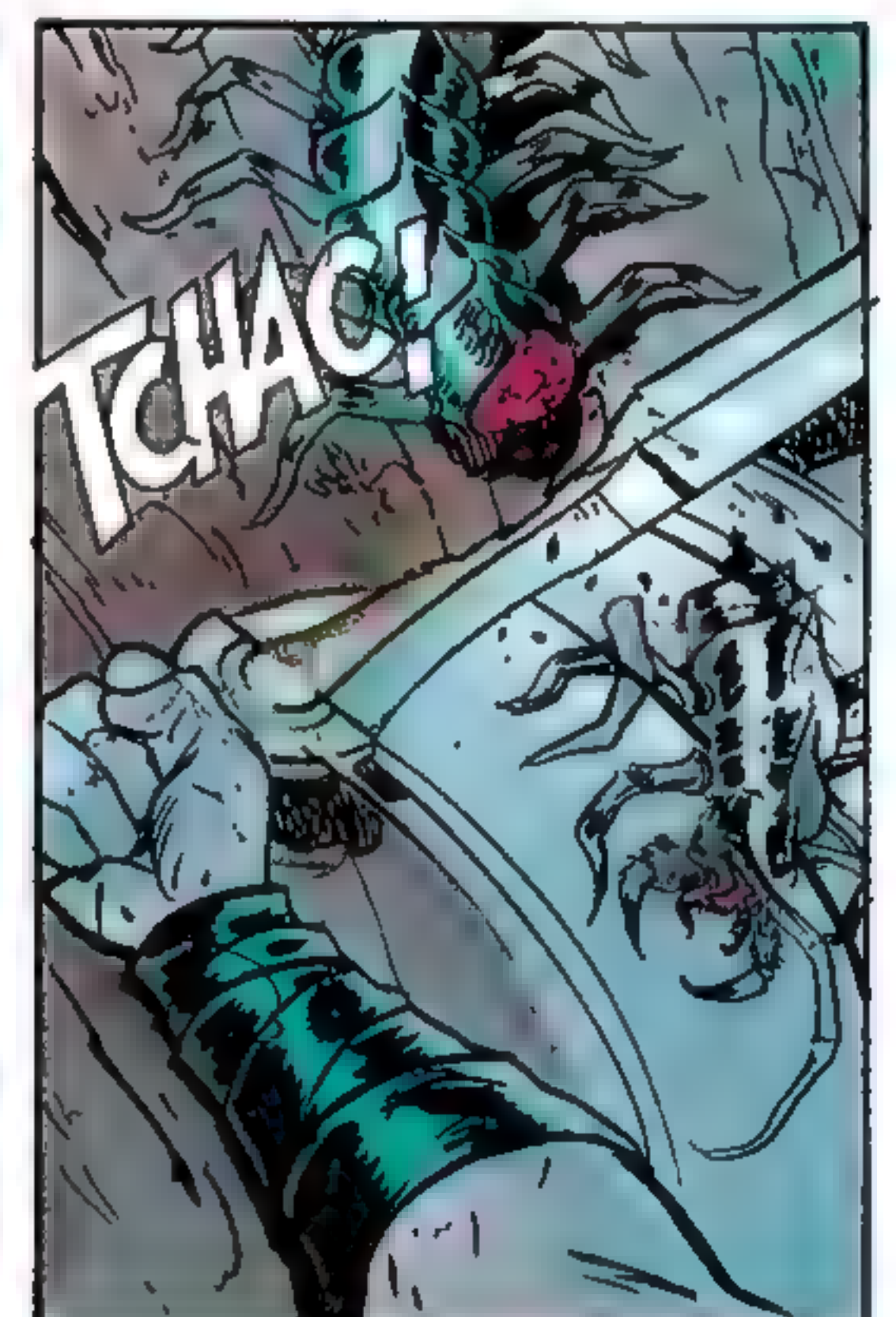
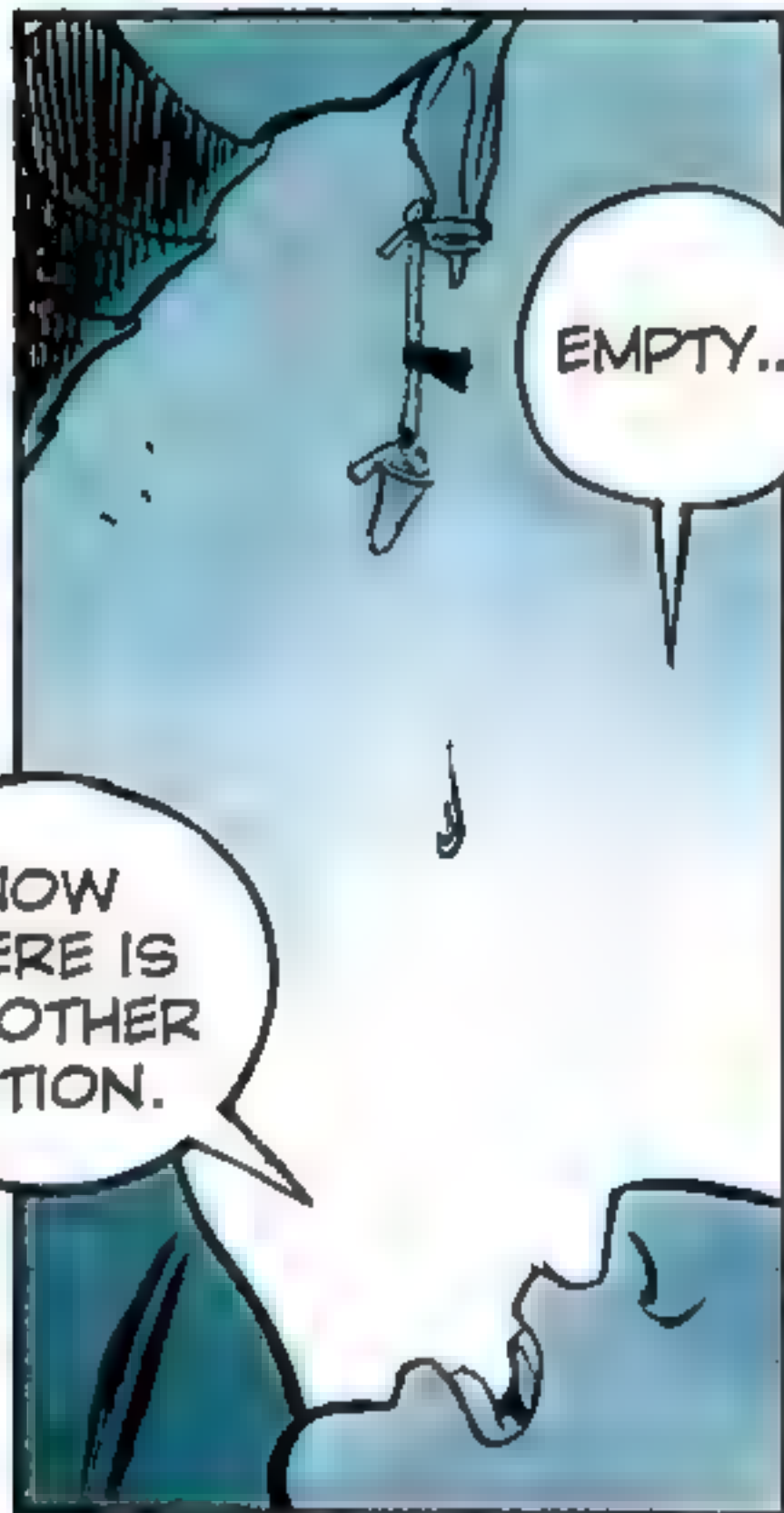
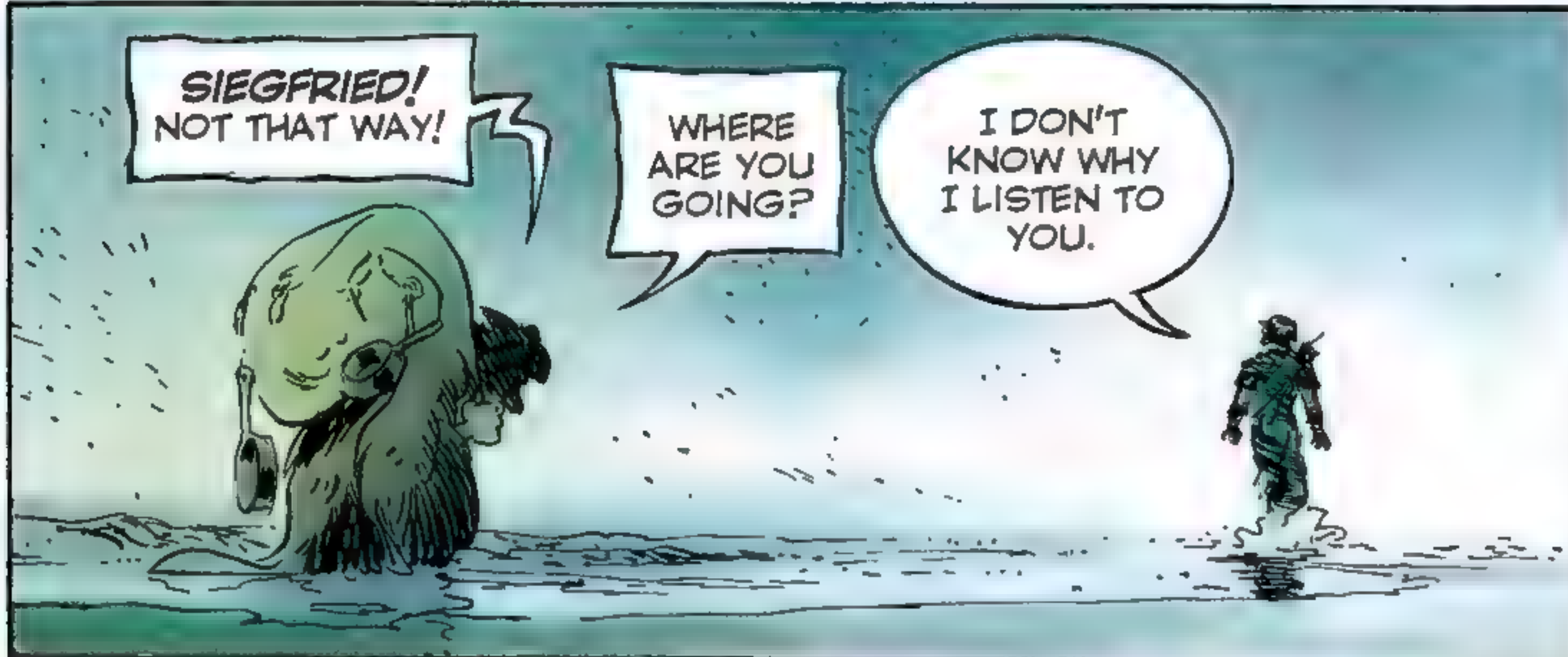
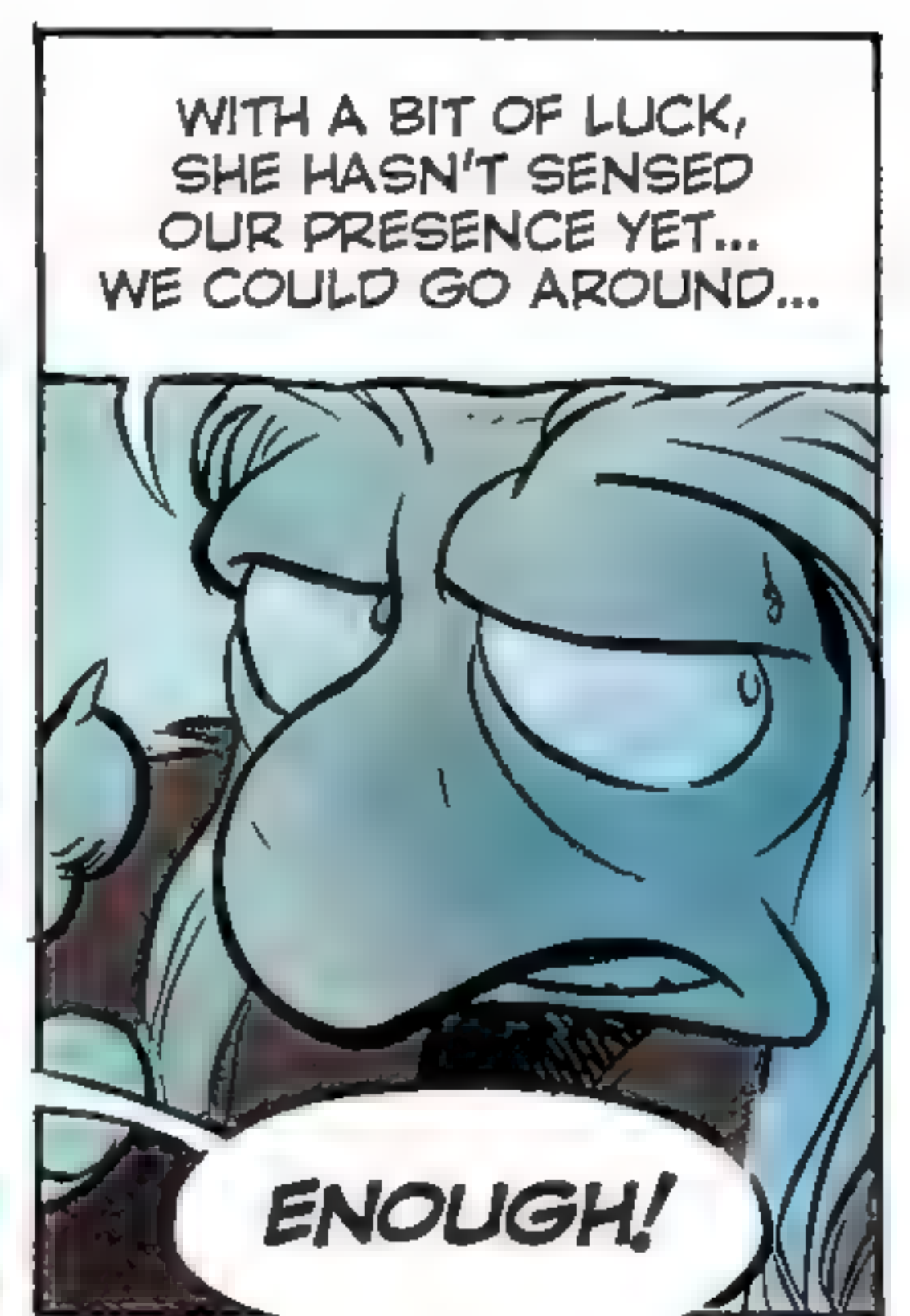
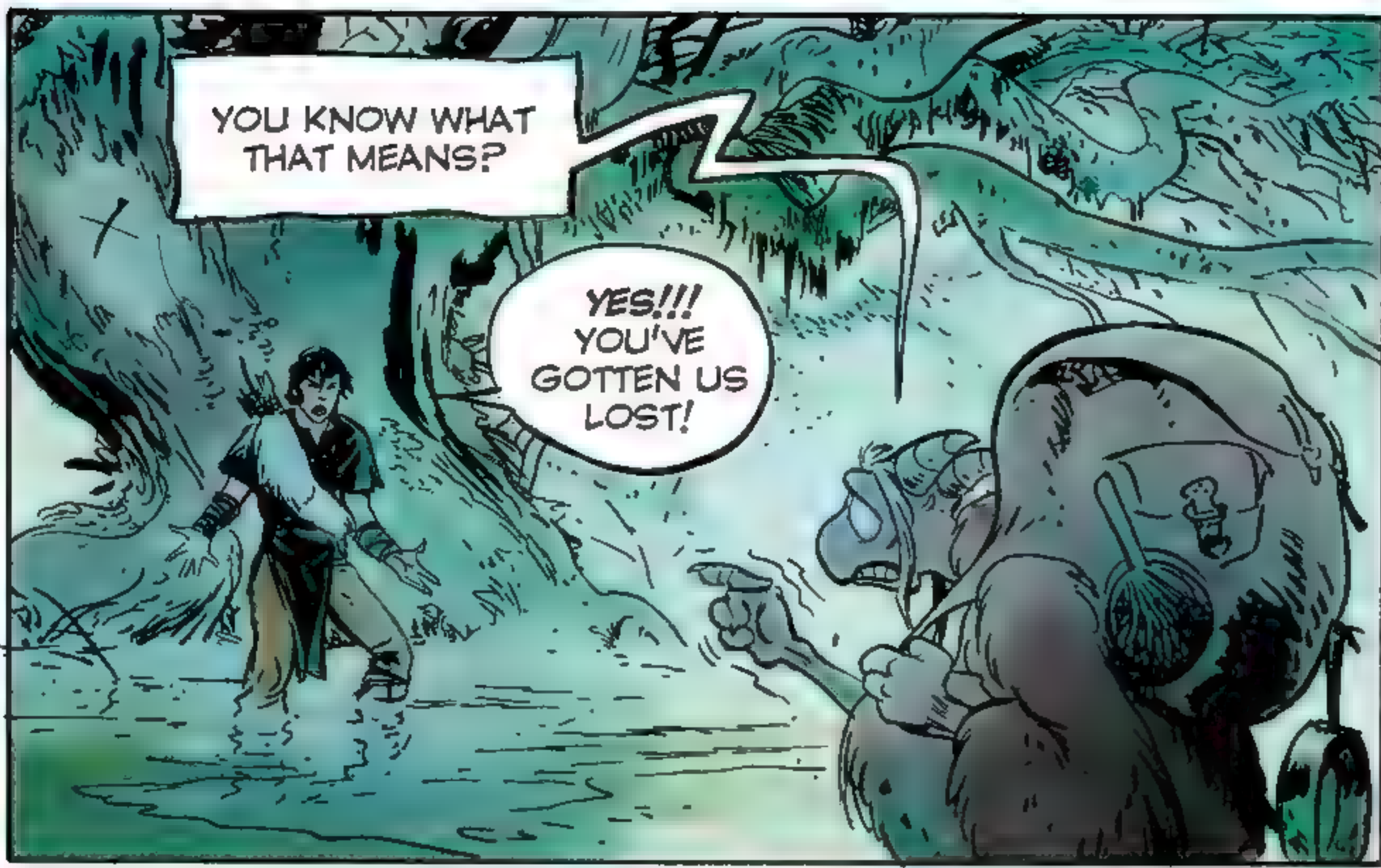
MIMÉ?

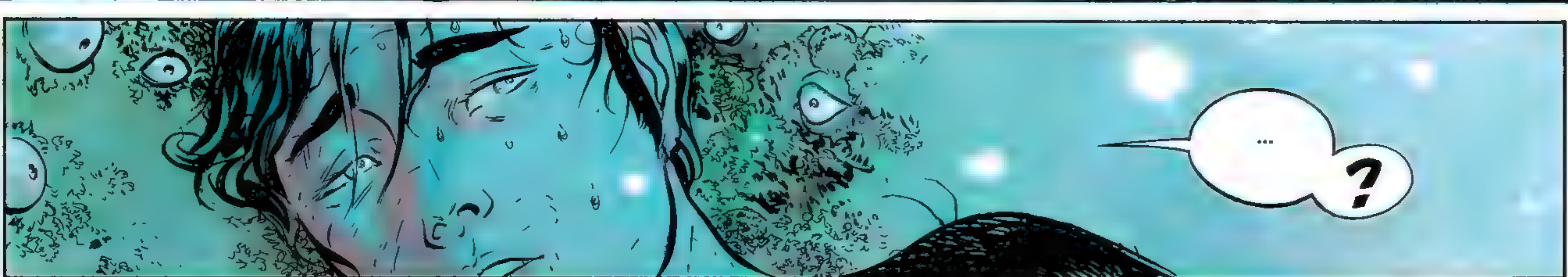
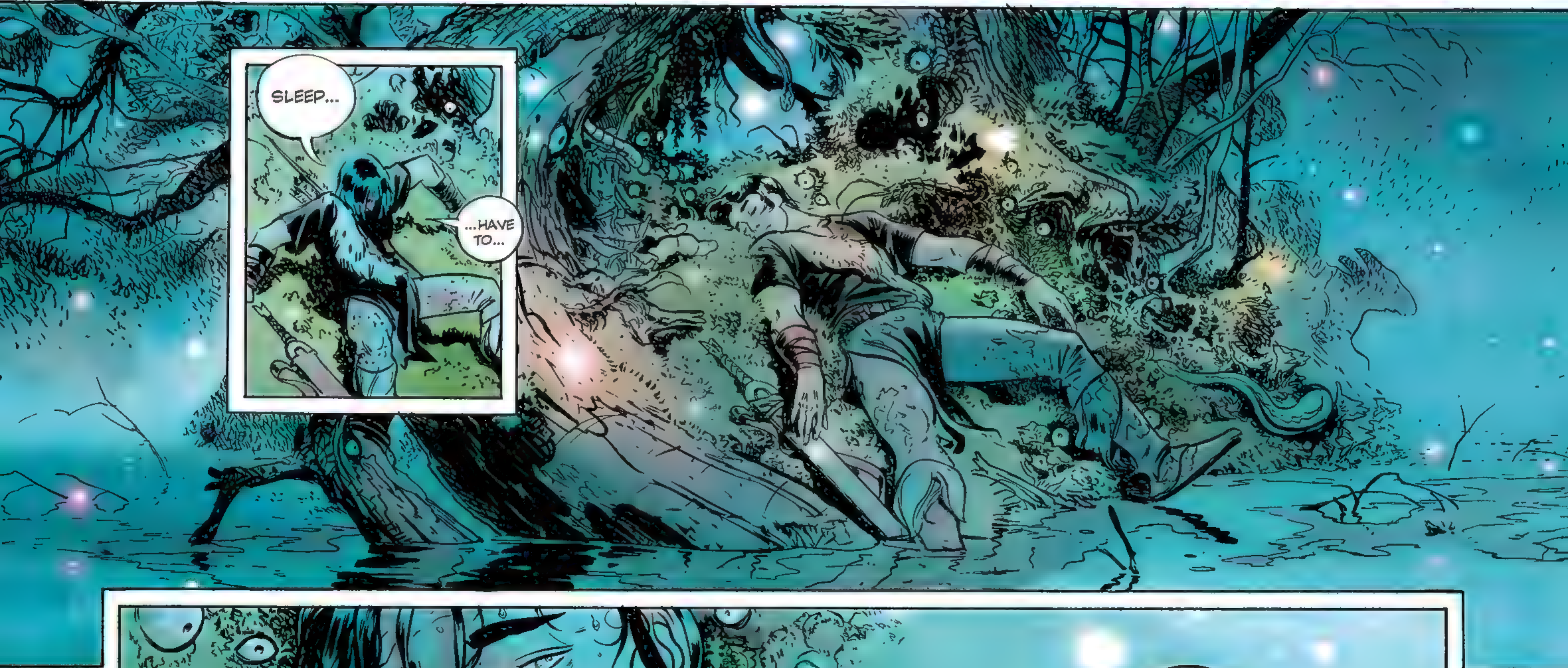
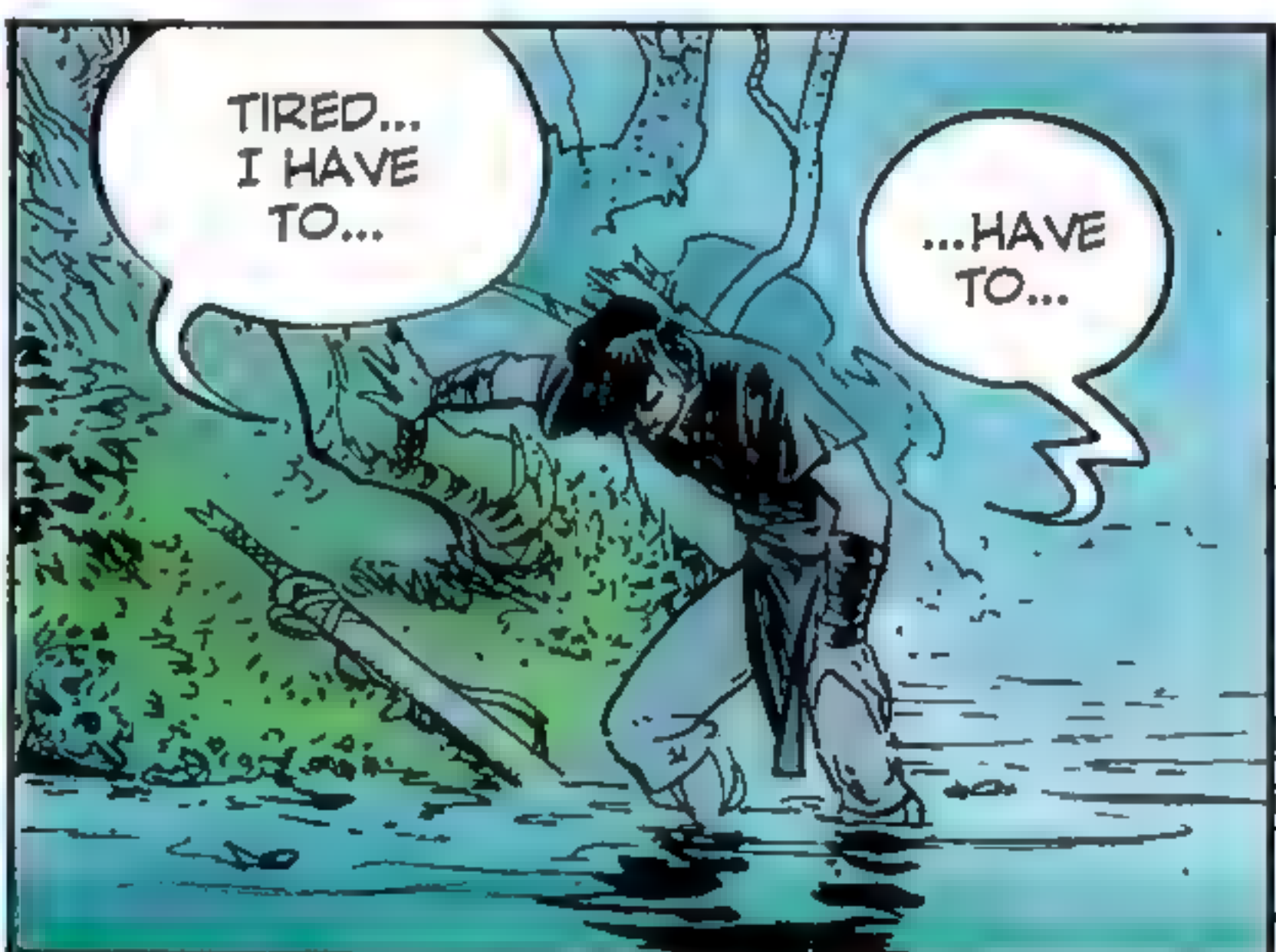
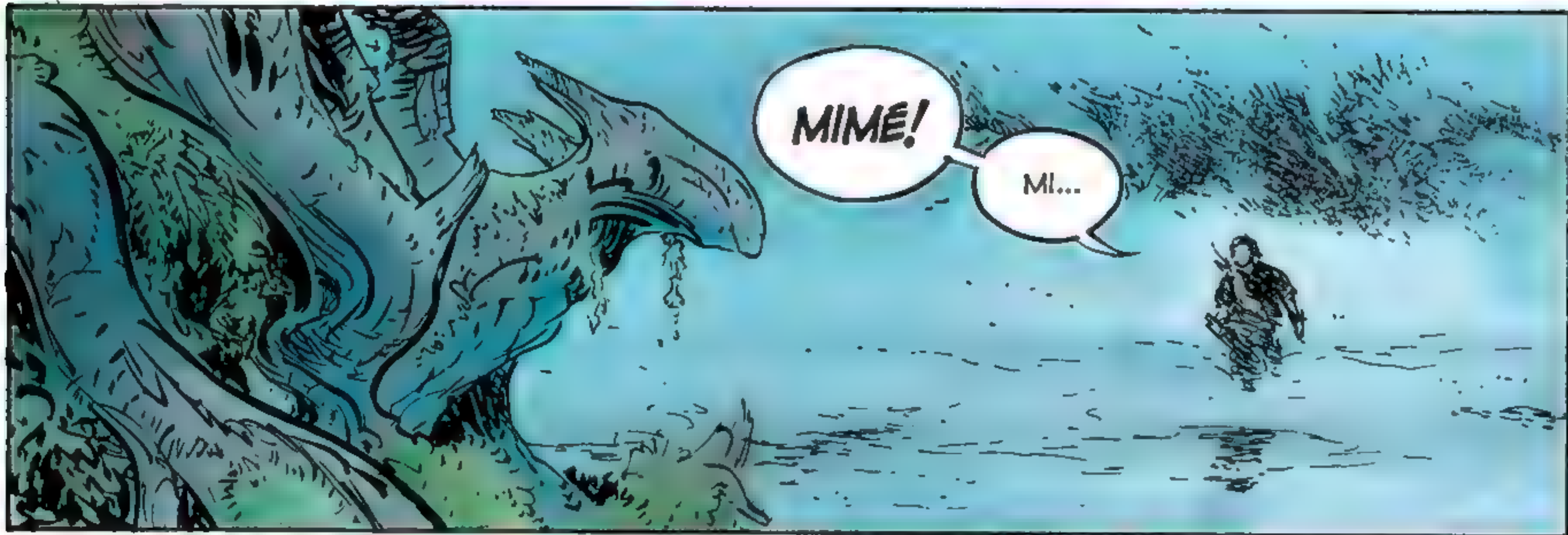
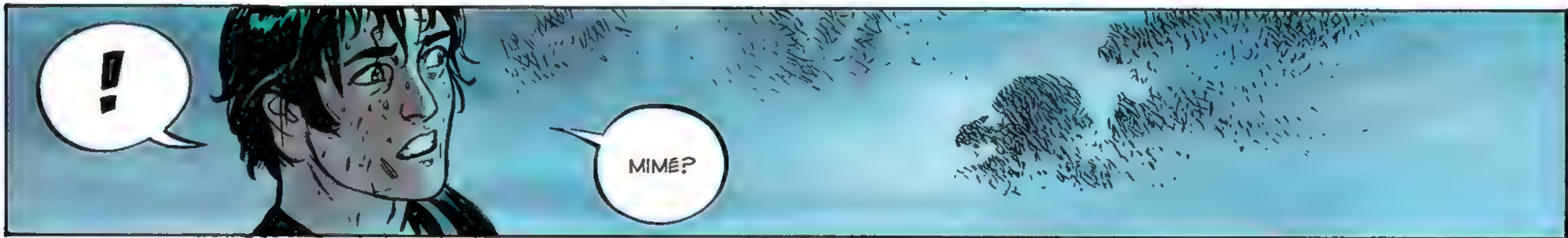
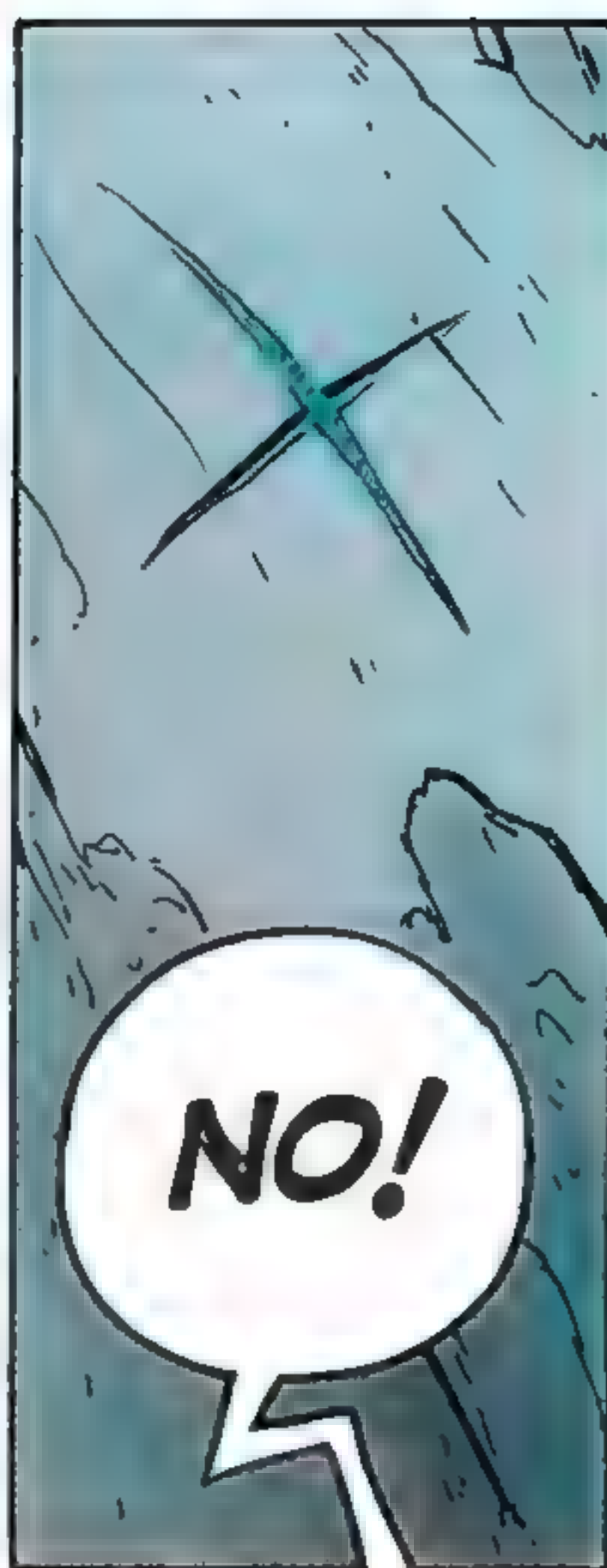
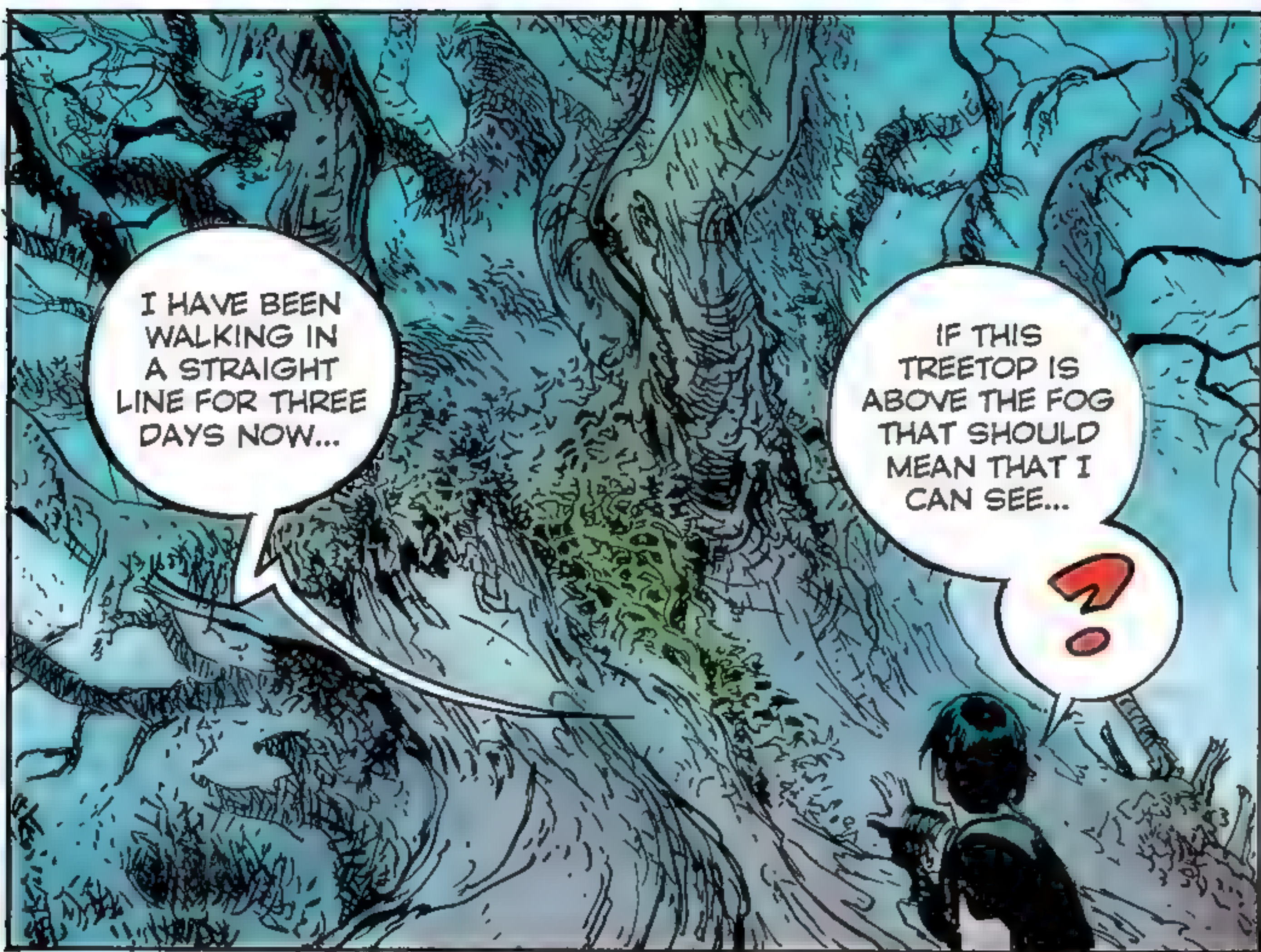


LIAR.





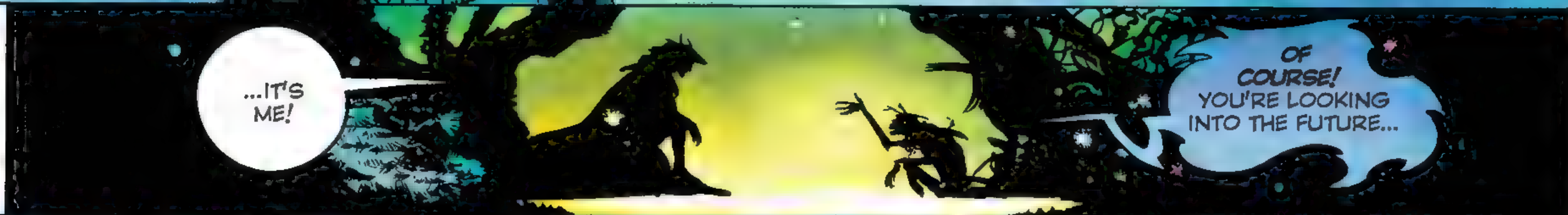






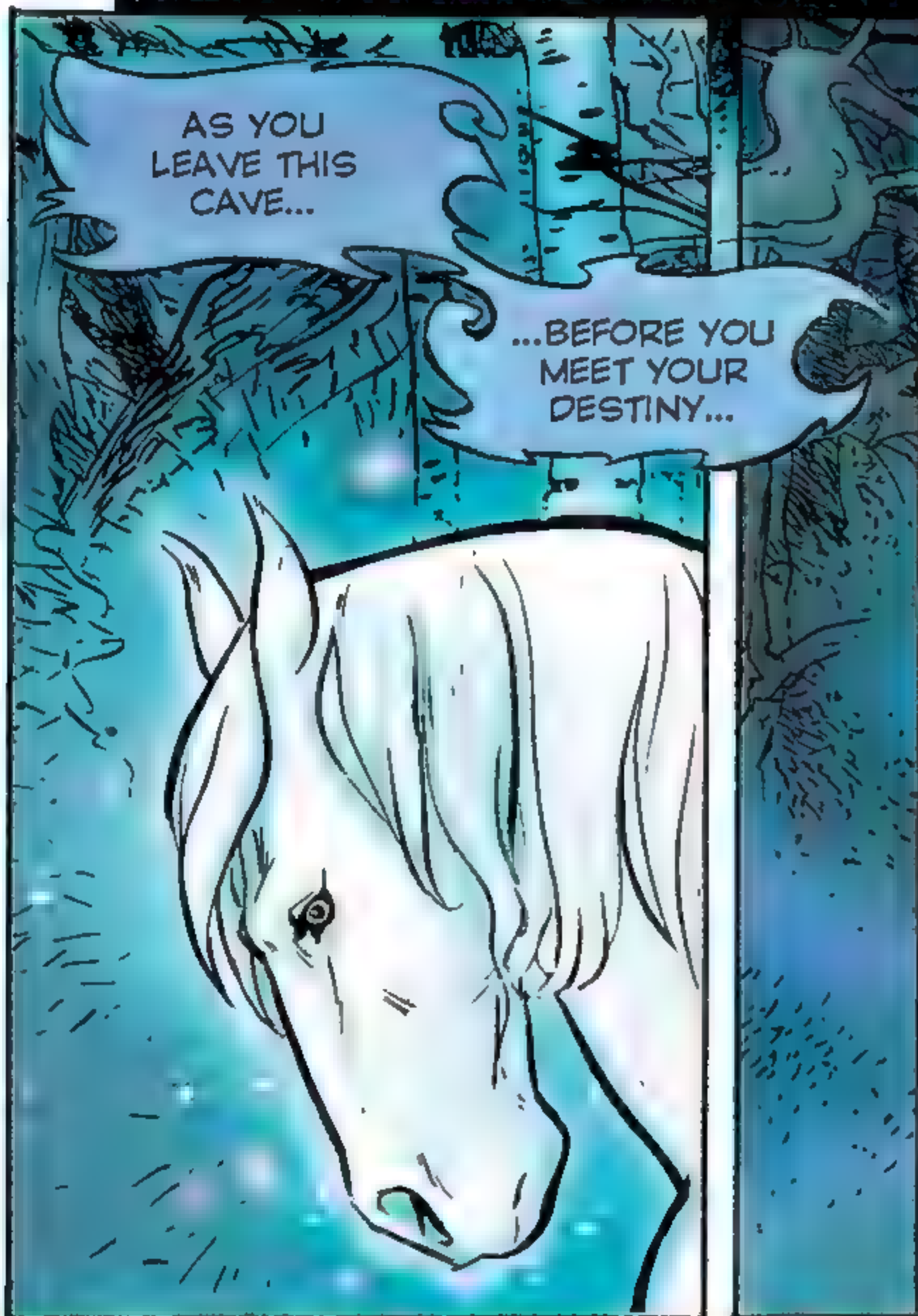
??

BUT...



...IT'S ME!

OF COURSE!
YOU'RE LOOKING
INTO THE FUTURE...



AS YOU
LEAVE THIS
CAVE...

...BEFORE YOU
MEET YOUR
DESTINY...



...YOU WILL SEE
EACH OTHER...



...FOR JUST
A BRIEF
INSTANT.

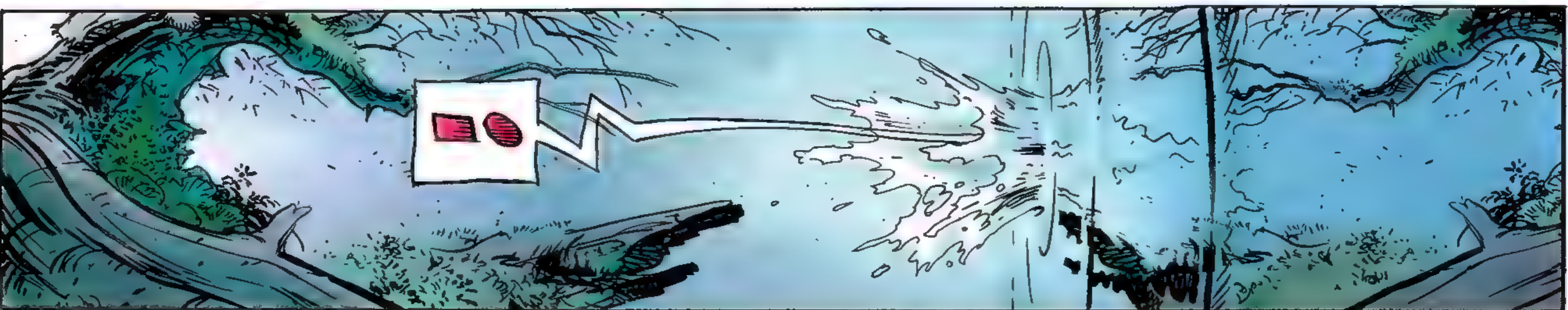


EH!

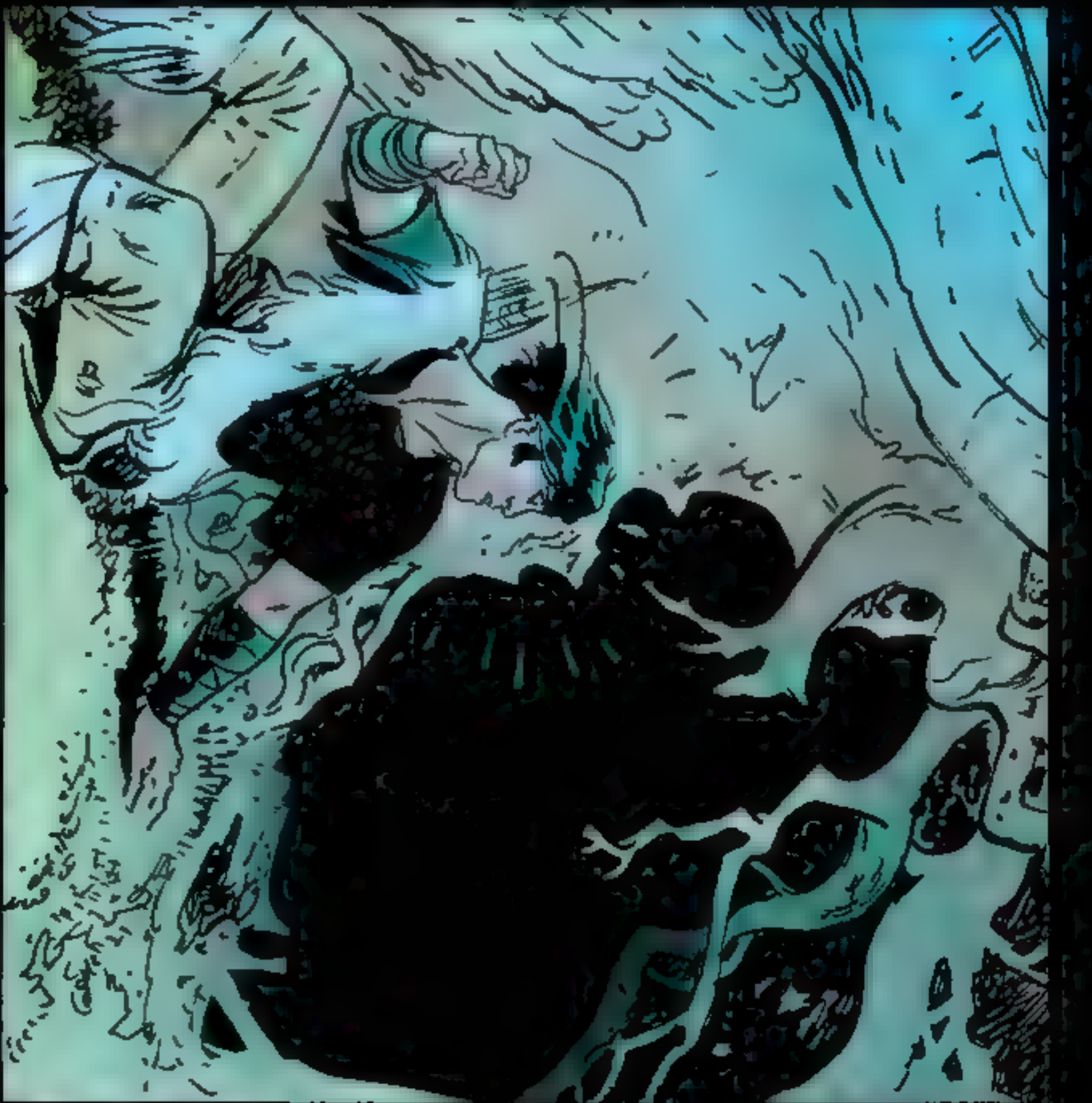
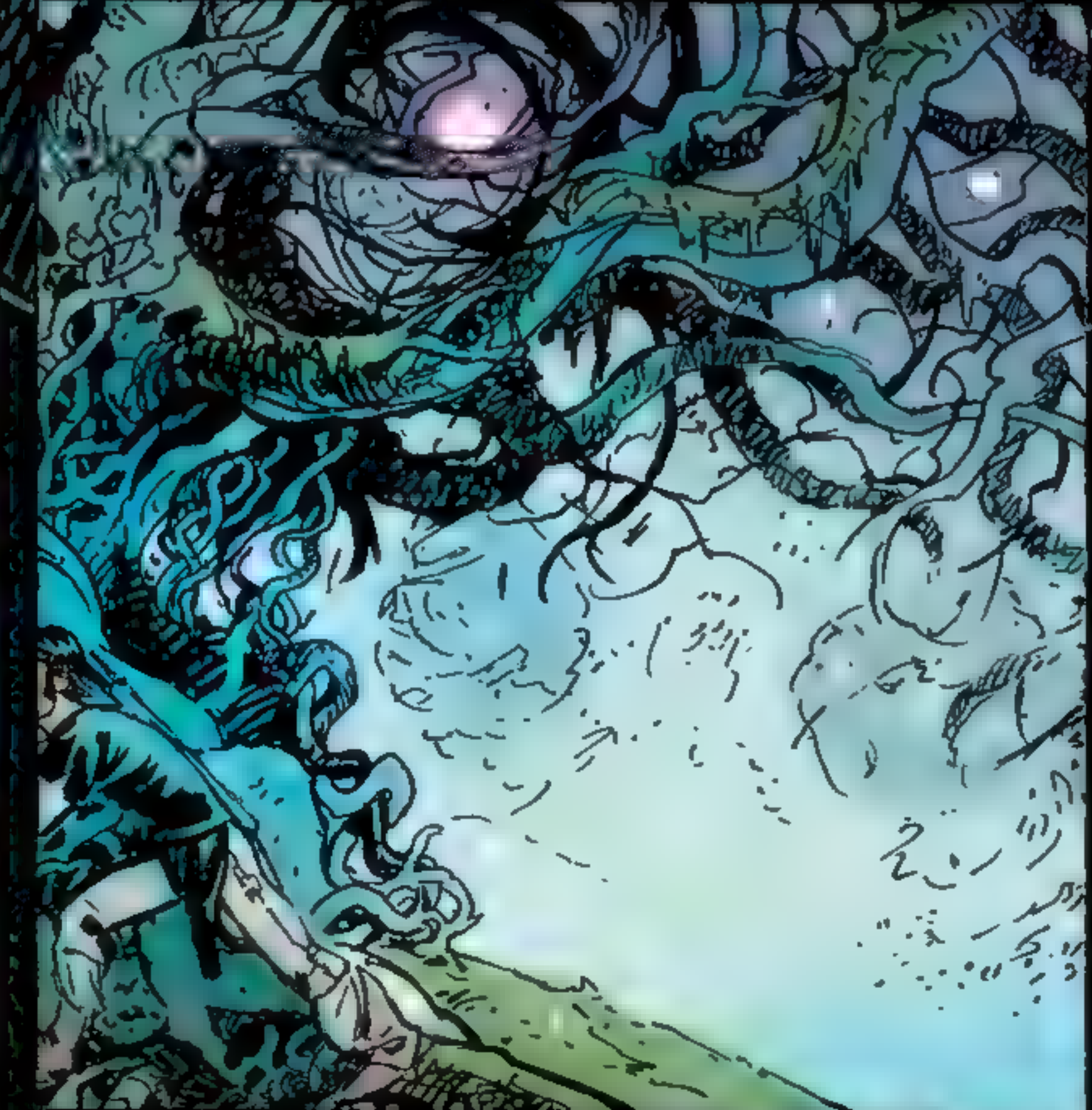
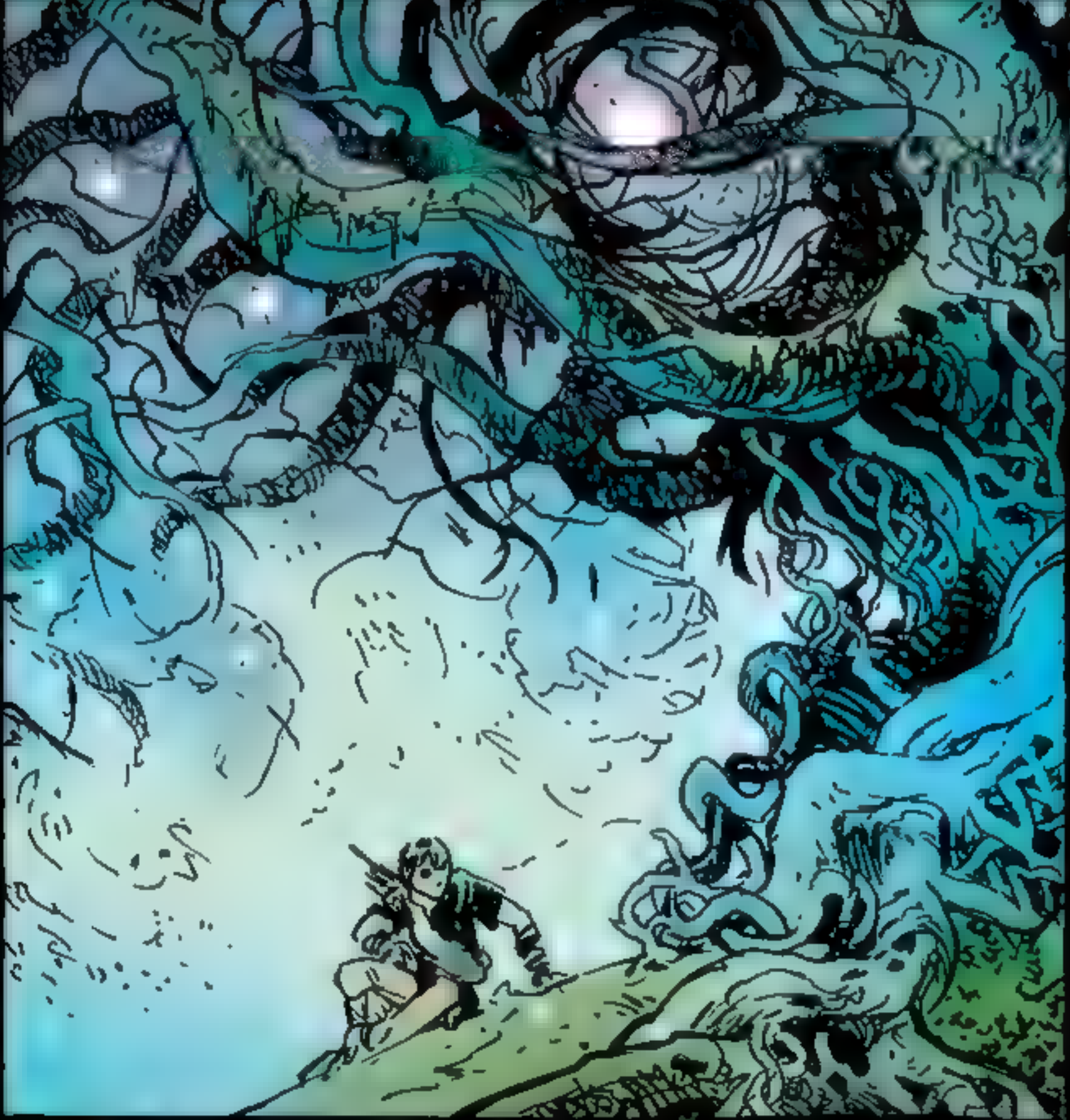
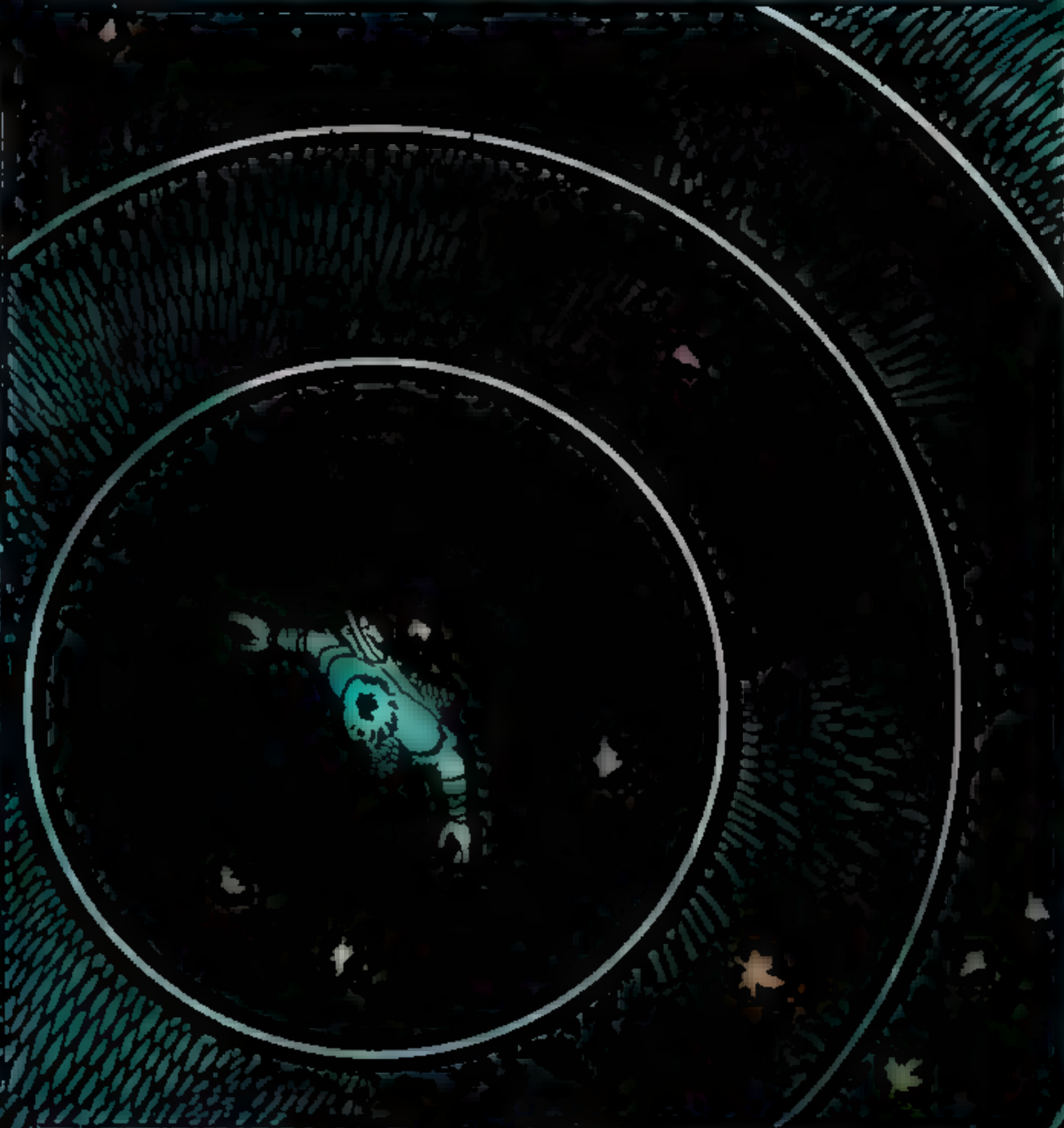
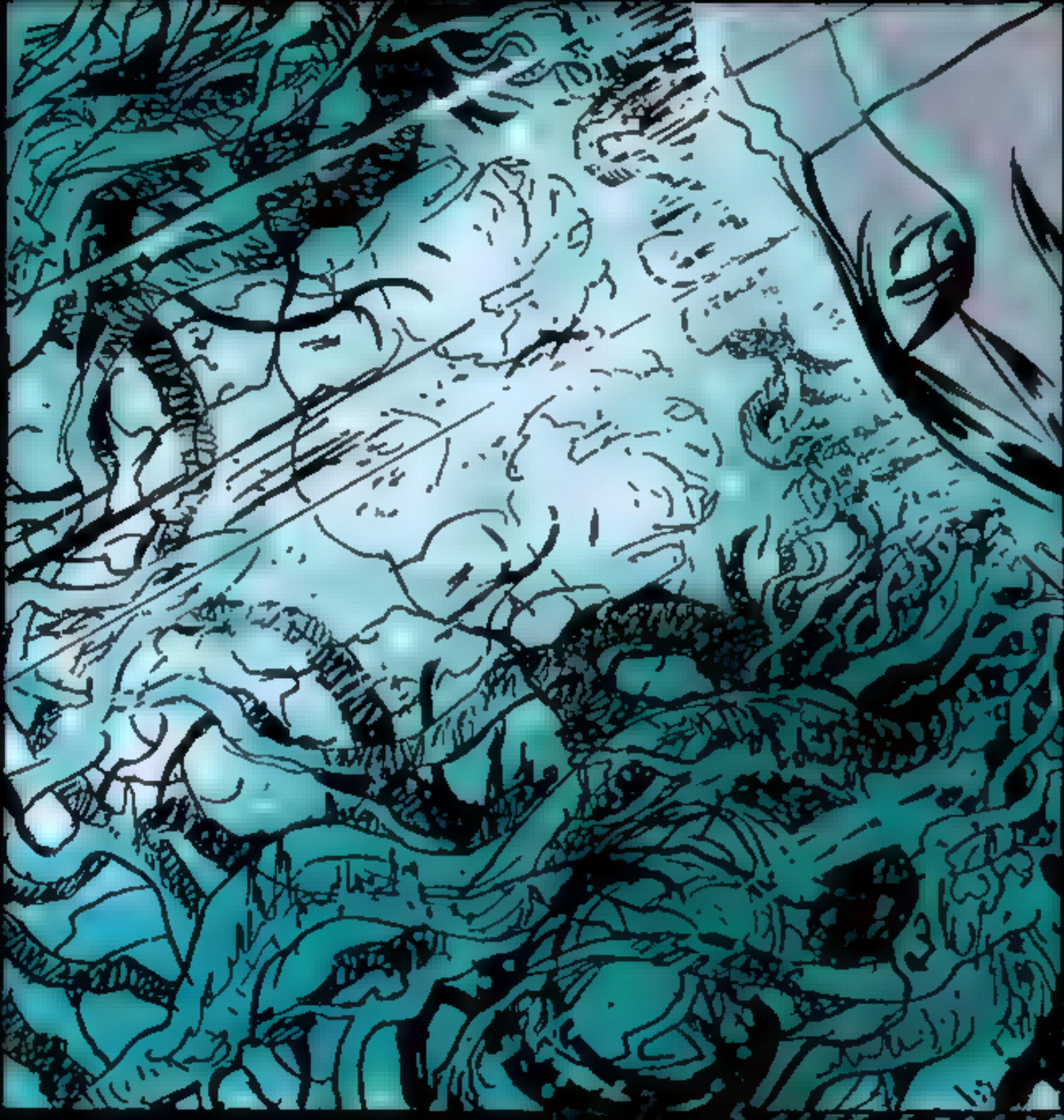
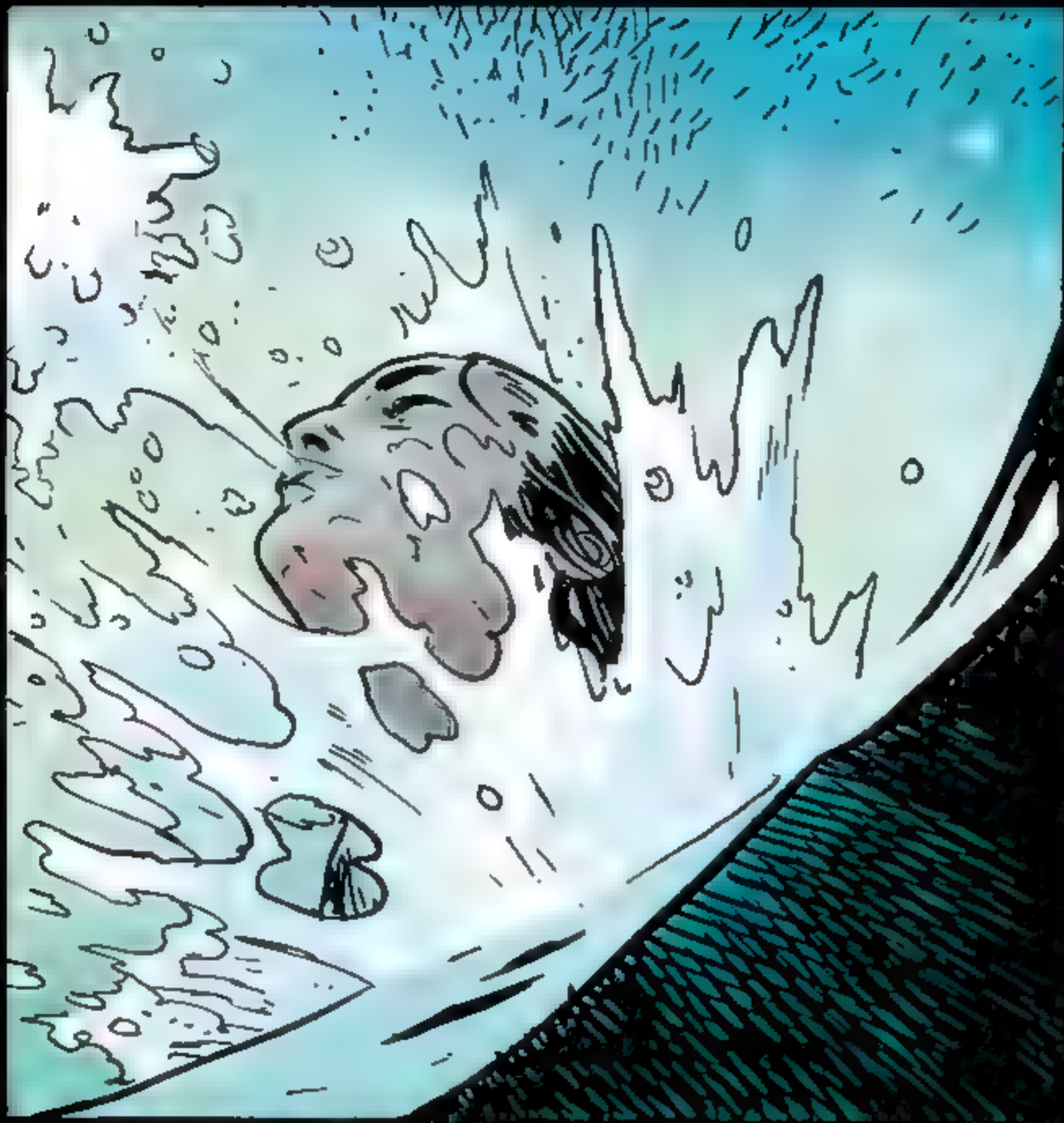


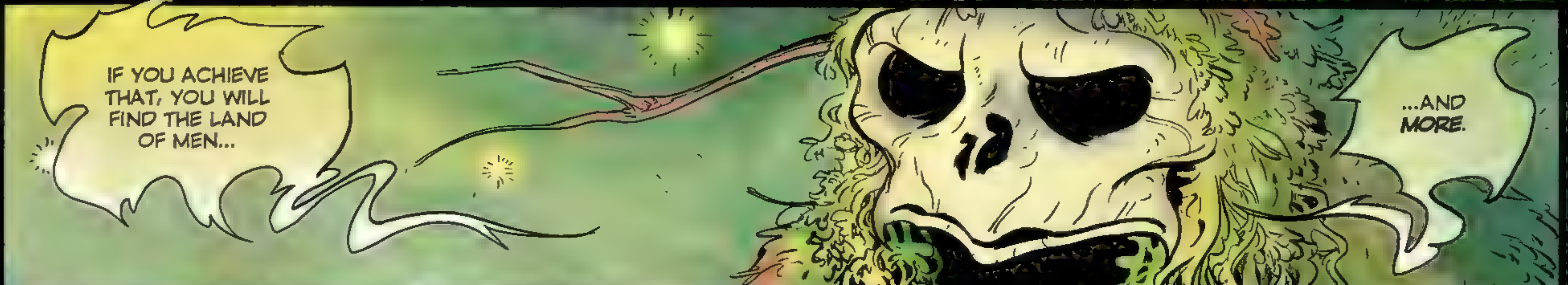
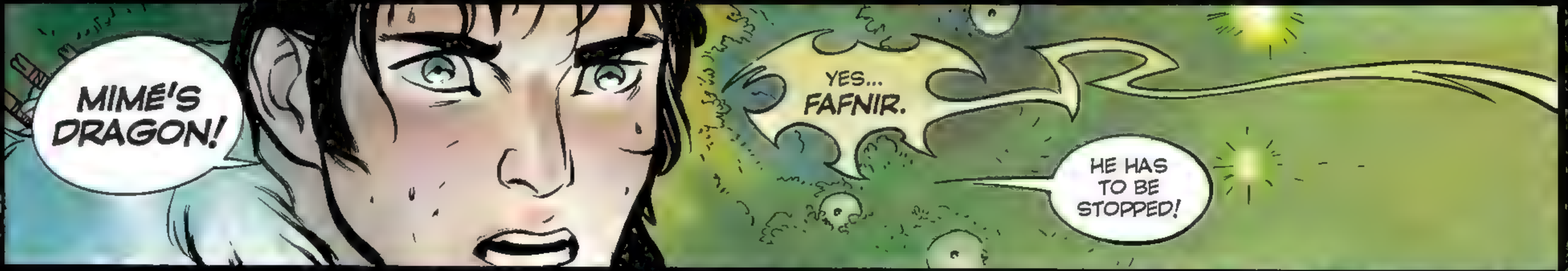
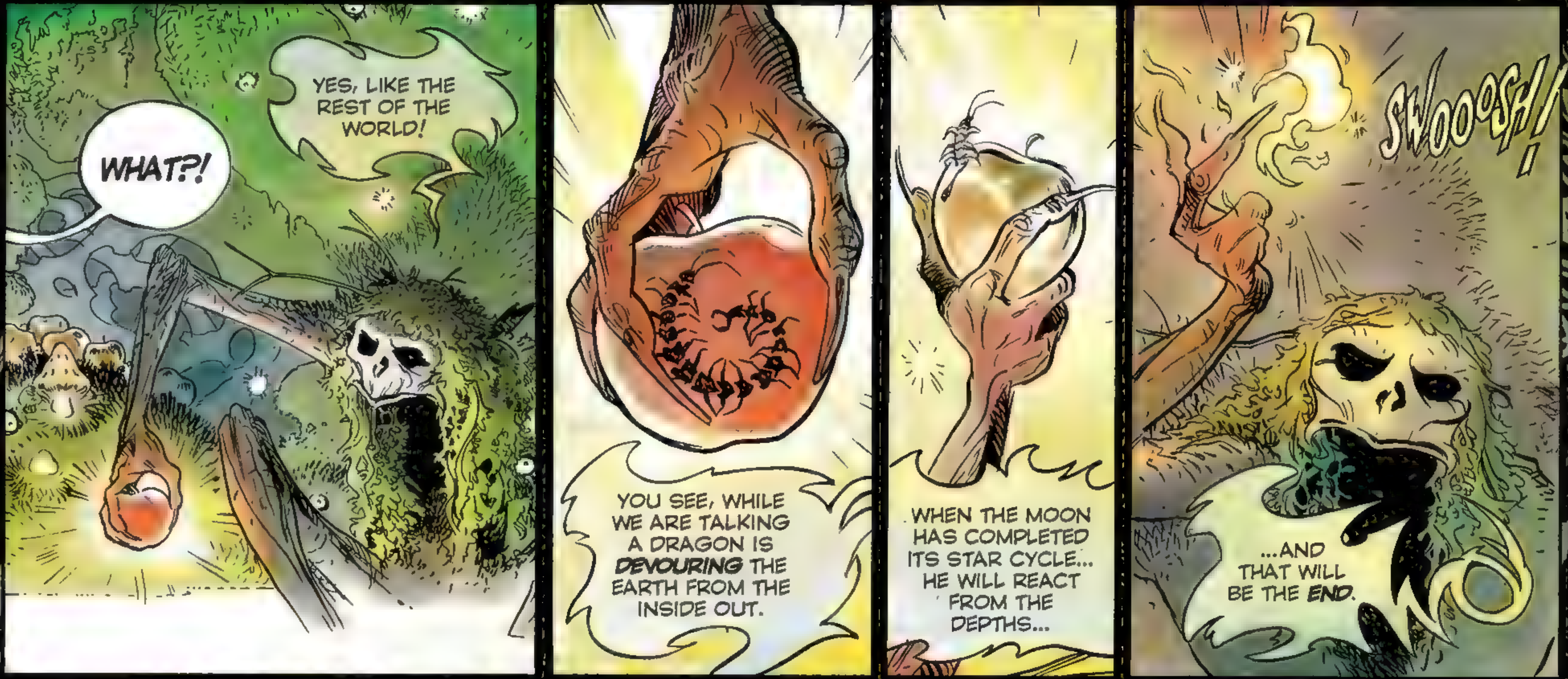
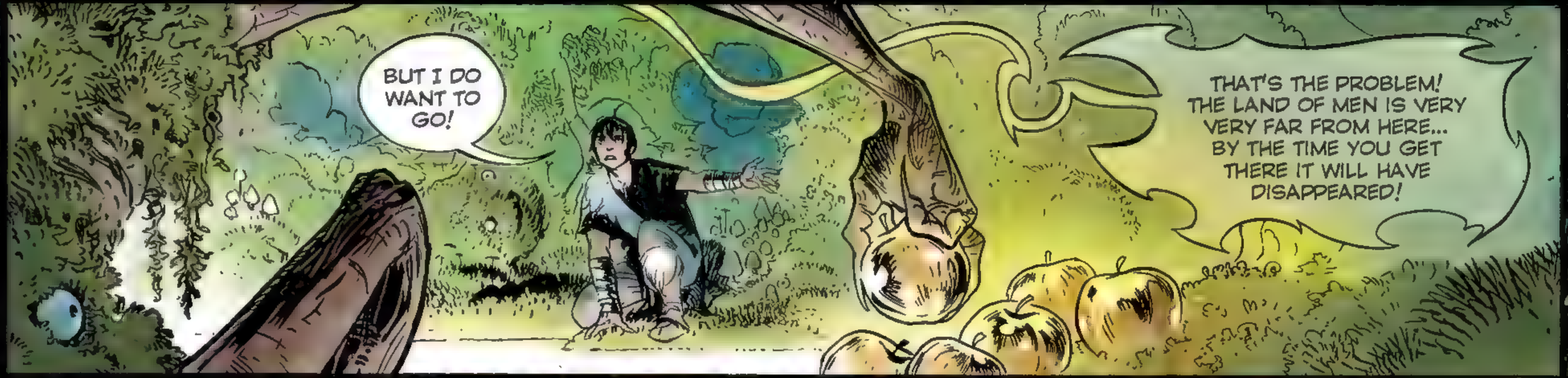
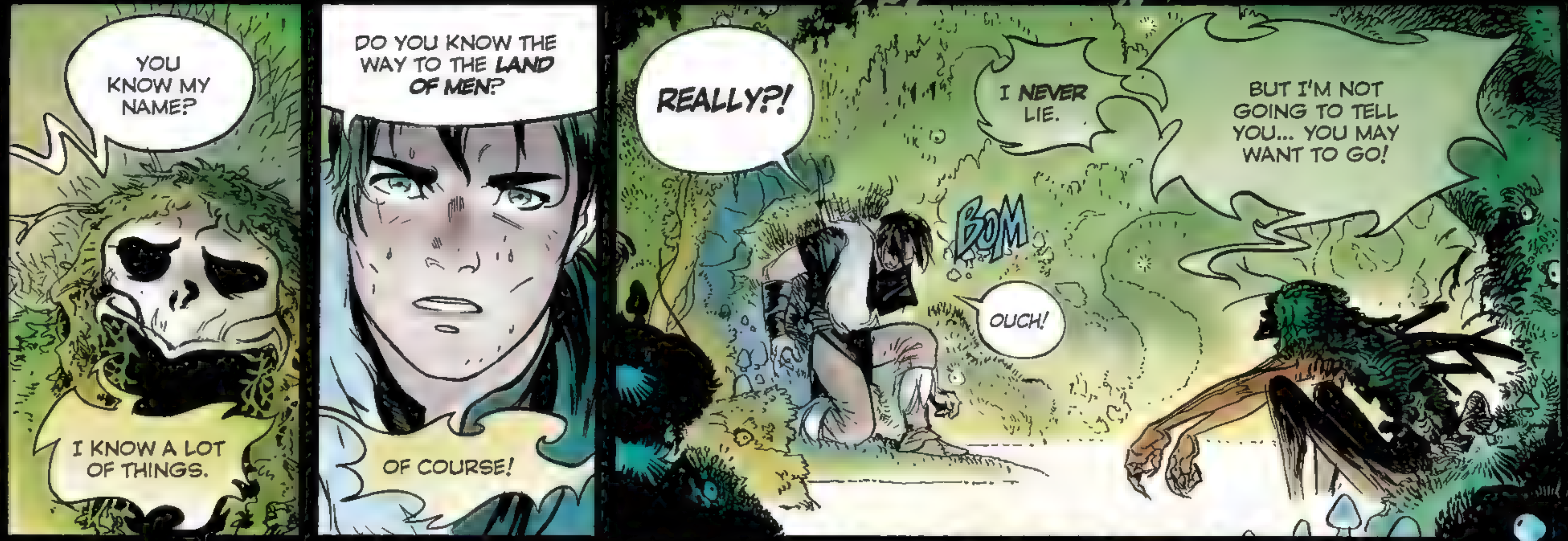
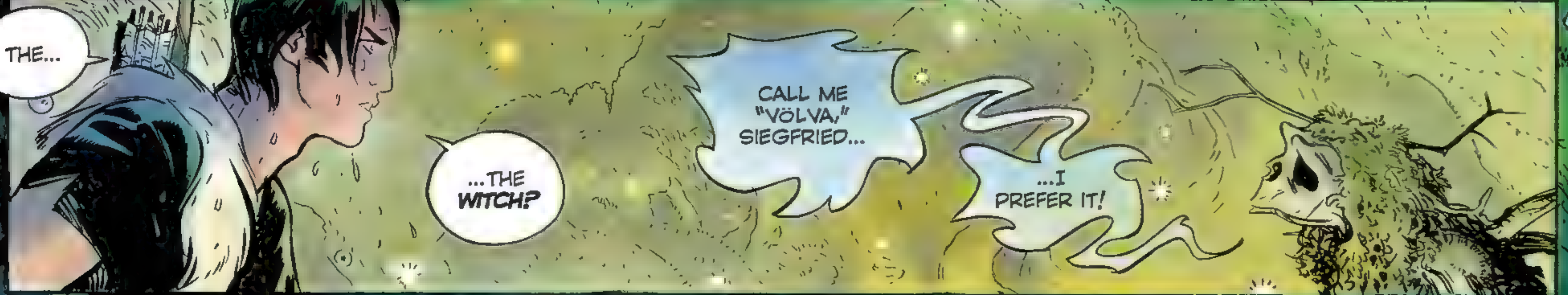
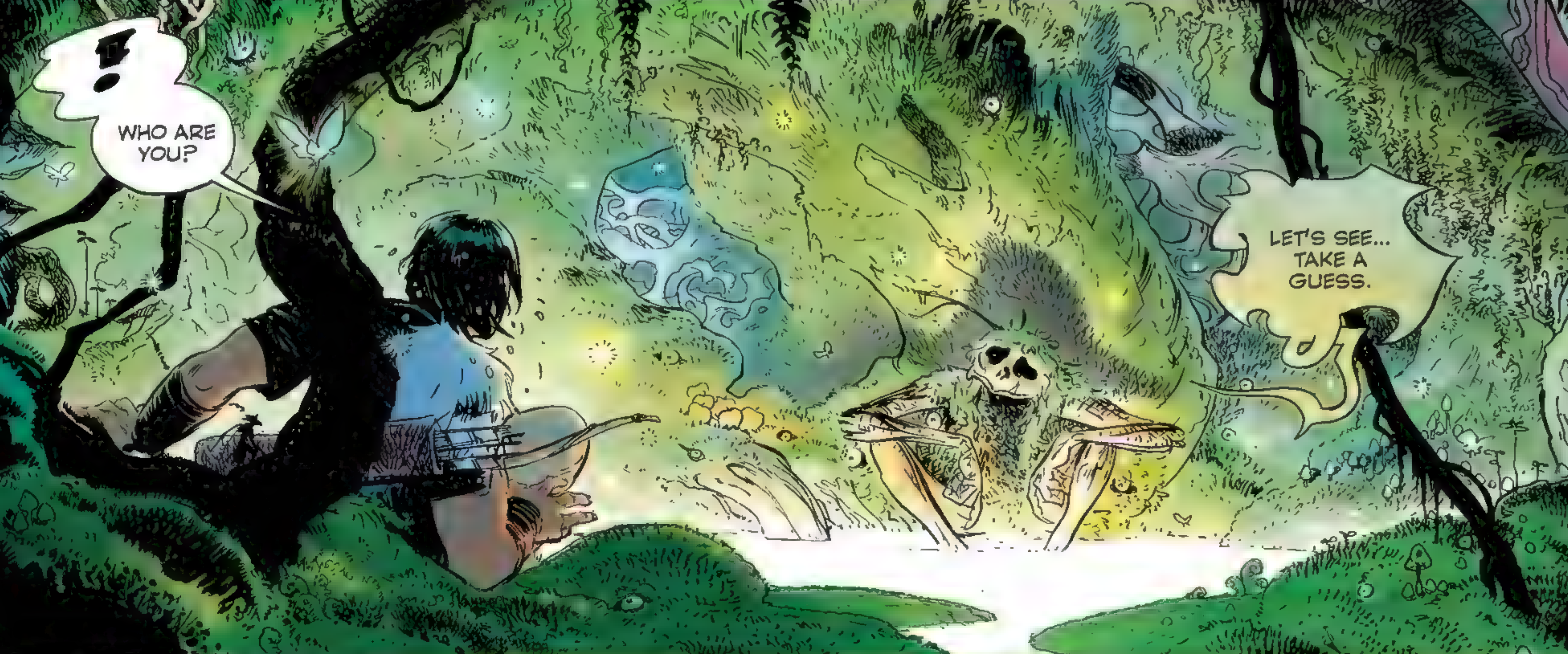
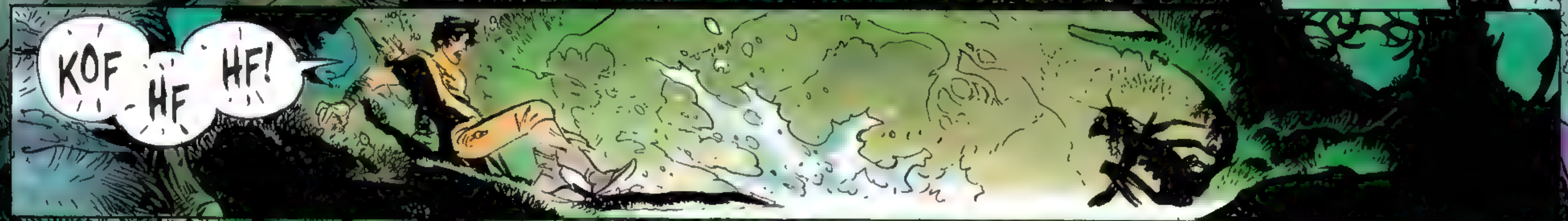
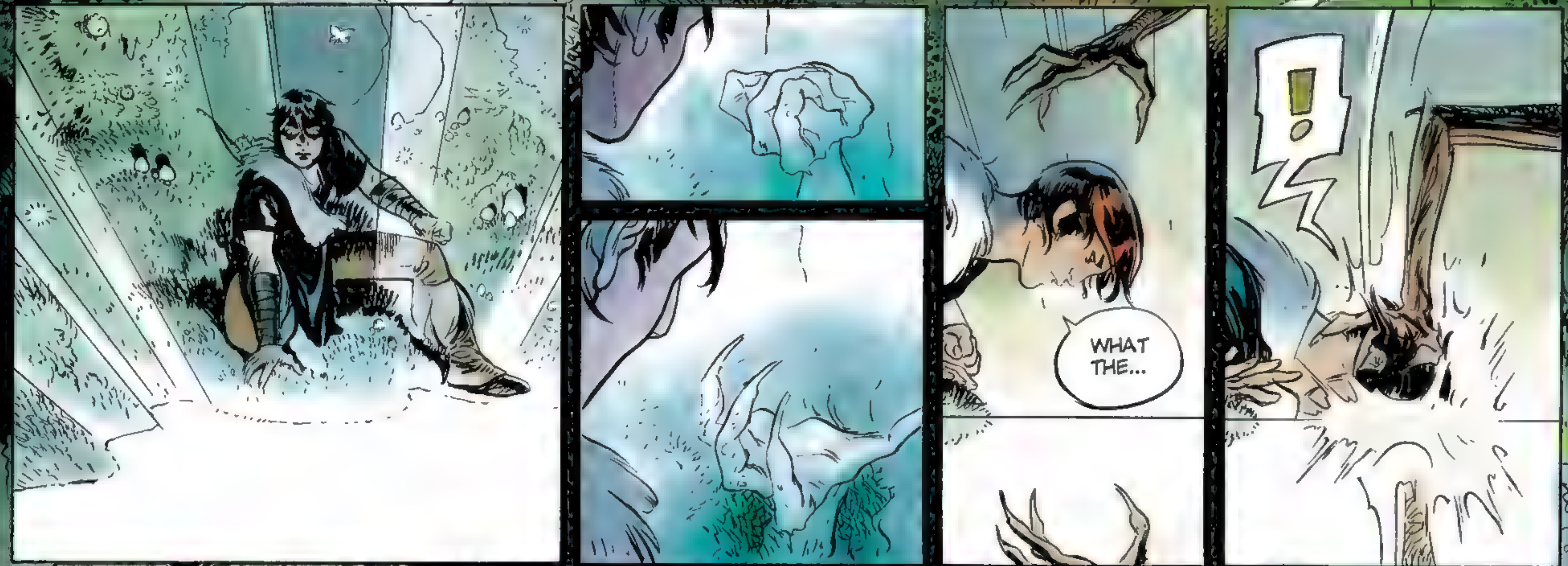
COME
BACK!

WHO
ARE
YOU?



BO





BUT
THE DRAGON
MUST BE
HUGE!
BIGGER
THAN...

...THAN
...

HE IS **HUGE**. SO BIG
THAT YOU'LL NEED
THREE WEAPONS TO
HAVE ANY HOPE OF
DEFEATING HIM...

FIRST A SWORD
HARDER THAN STONE
TO PIERCE HIS HEART...

THE CONFIDENCE
TO RECOGNIZE
YOUR ALLIES...

WHAT
ALLIES?

AND FINALLY...
OH, BUT THE
THIRD YOU
ALSO DO NOT
HAVE...

WHAT
IS IT?

...A HEART SO STRONG
THAT IT WILL GIVE YOU
THE COURAGE TO IGNORE
FEAR!

I'M NOT
AFRAID OF
ANYTHING!

OOOH?

I THINK THAT THAT
IS ALL YOU KNOW,
**SIEGFRIED THE
ARROGANT!**
AND I CAN PROVE
IT TO YOU!

A
TEST!

DO YOU SEE THIS POOL?
IN ITS RIPPLES I CAN
BRING UP ANYTHING YOU
WANT... THE PAST... THE
PRESENT, THE FUTURE...

IF YOU LOOK INTO THIS
POOL, AND YOU ARE
FEARLESS... YOU WILL
FIND THE WAY OUT
OF THE WOODS!

IS THAT
CLEAR?

I CAN'T SEE
ANYTHING...

WHAT DO
YOU WANT TO
SEE?

THE PAST.

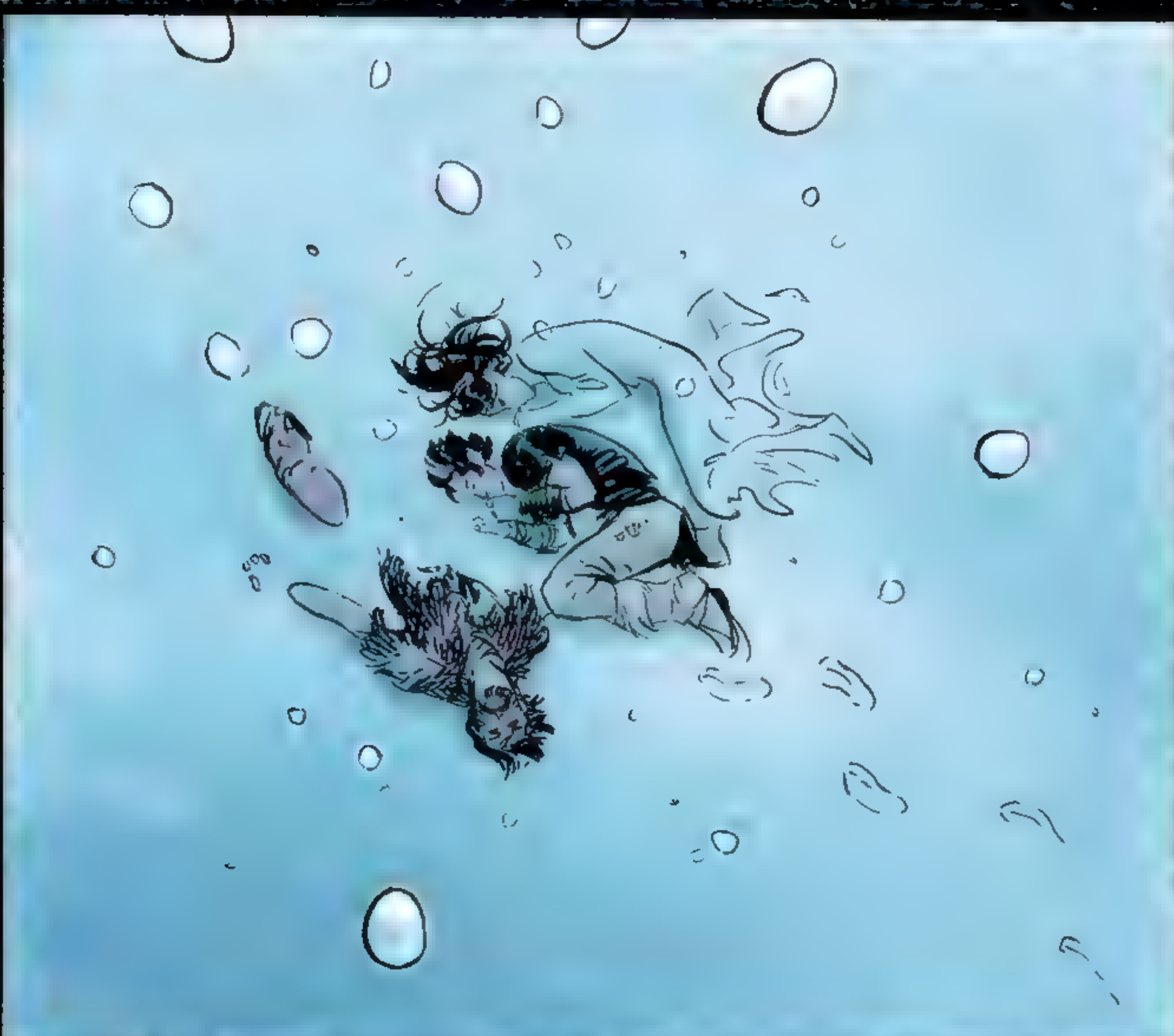
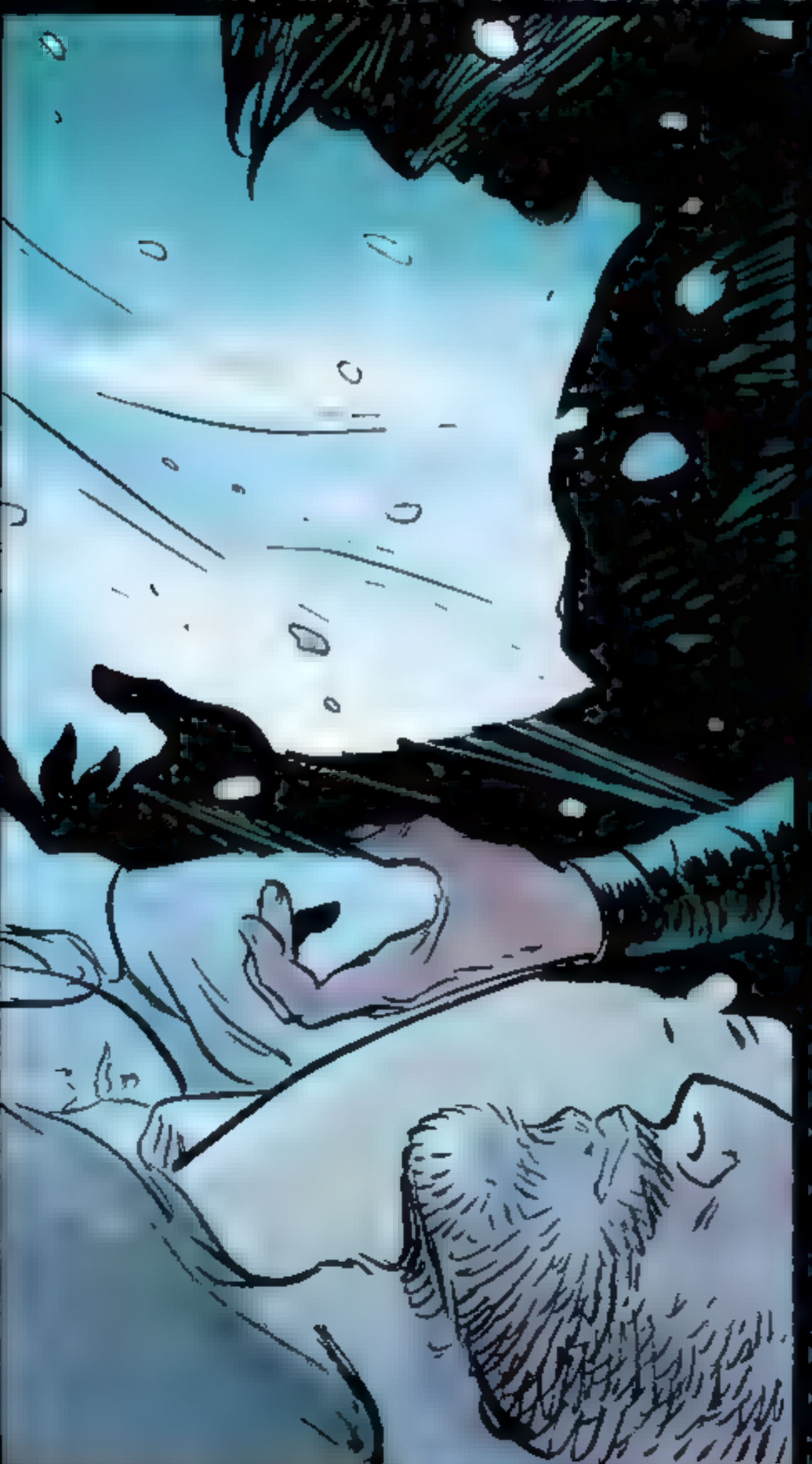
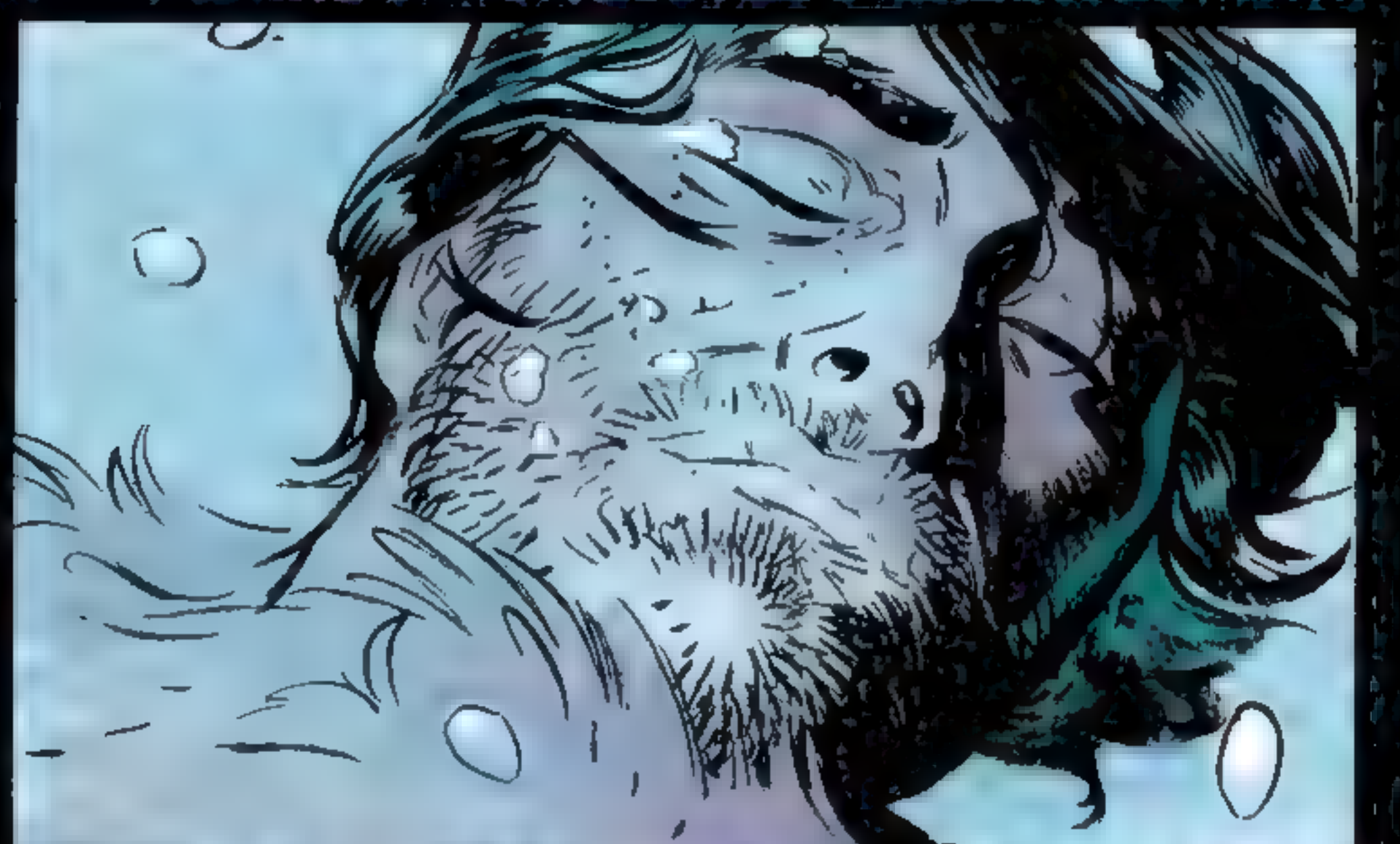
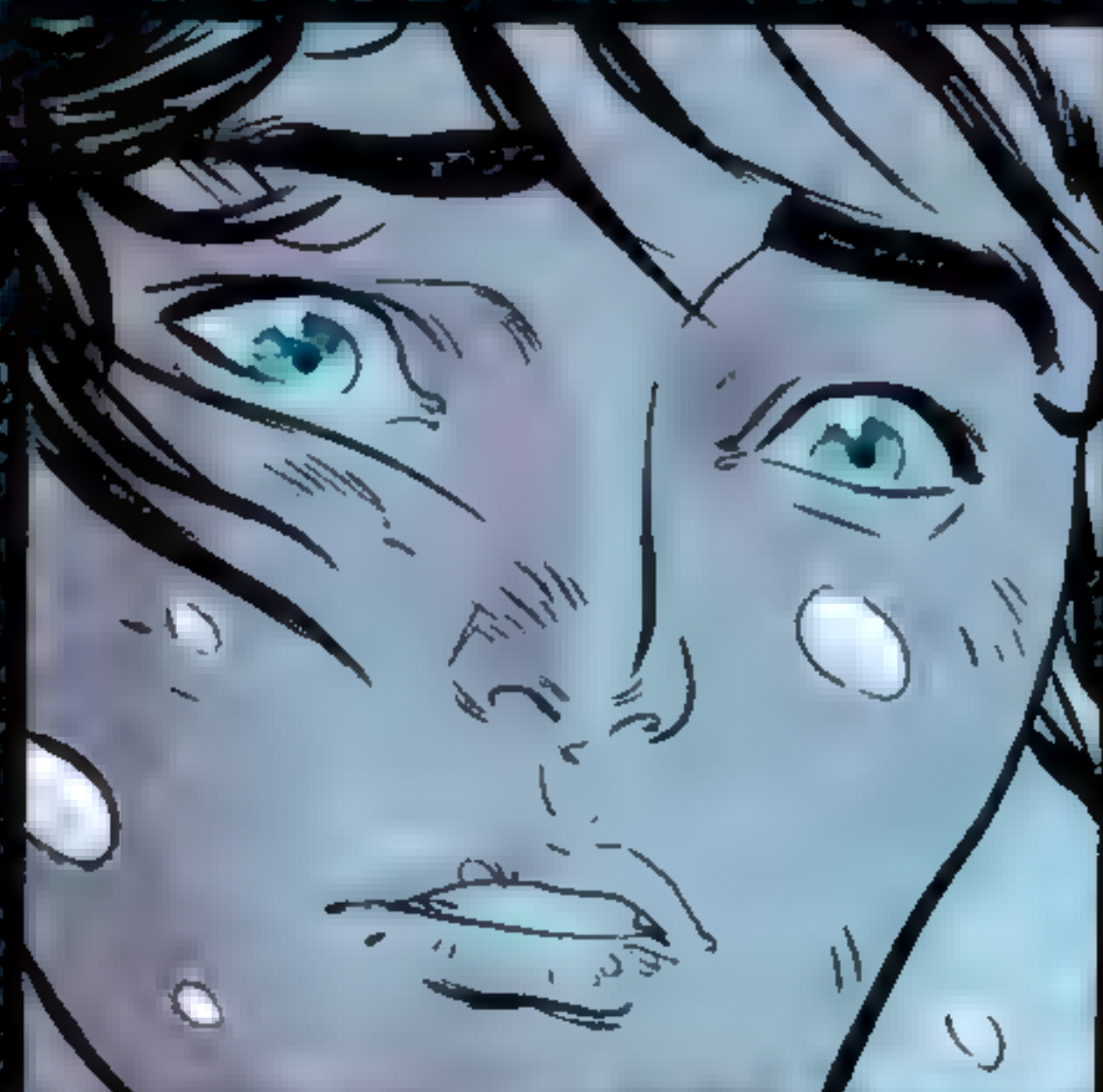
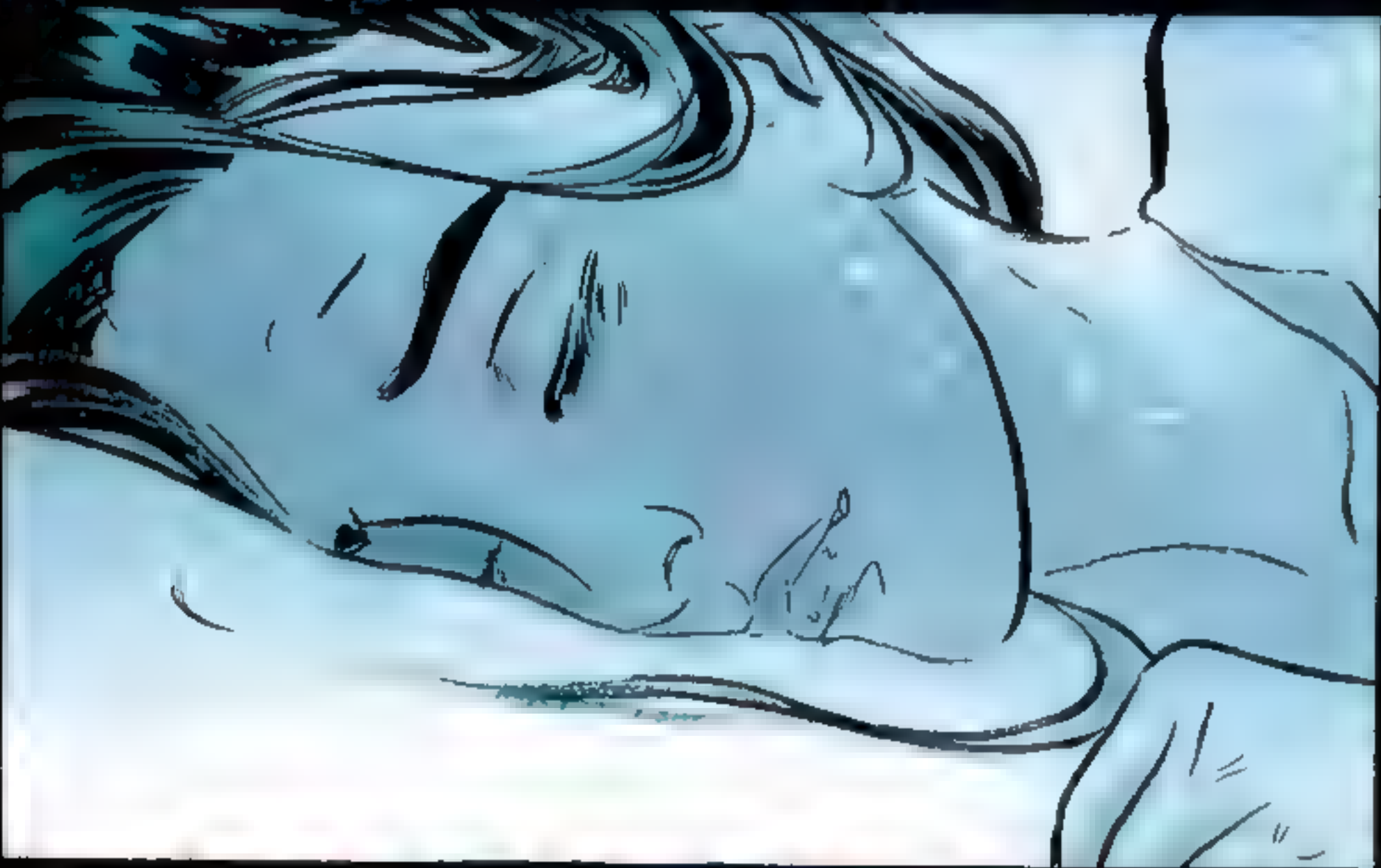
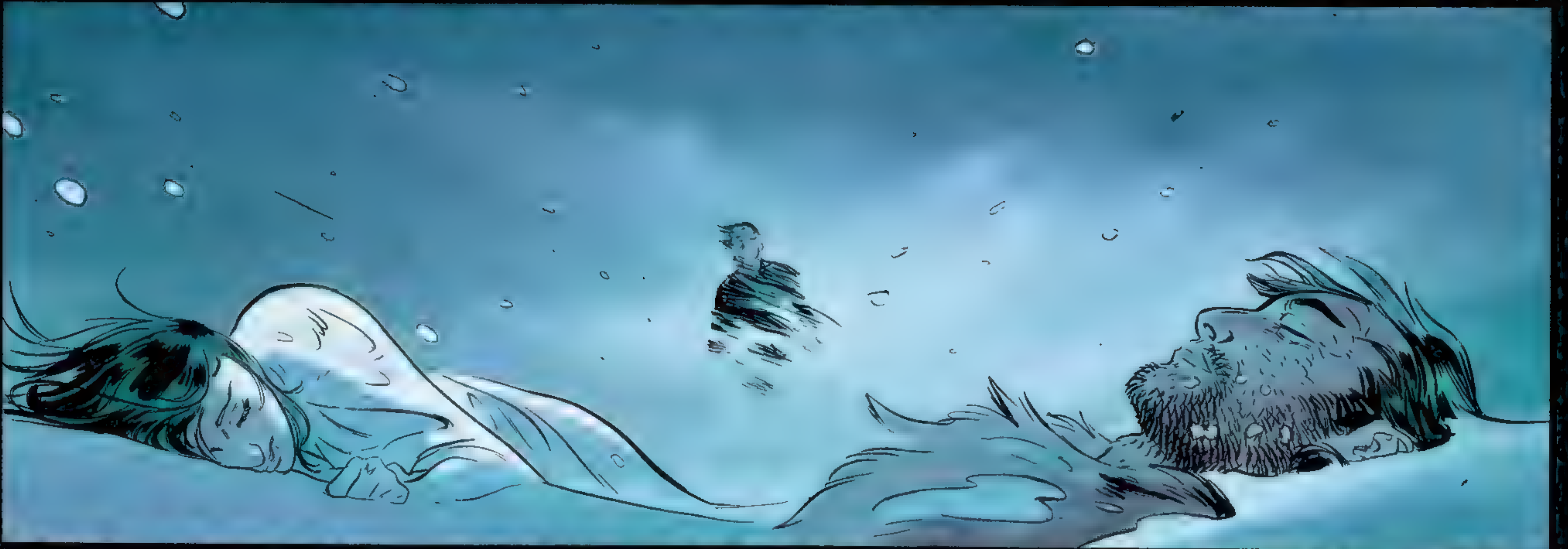
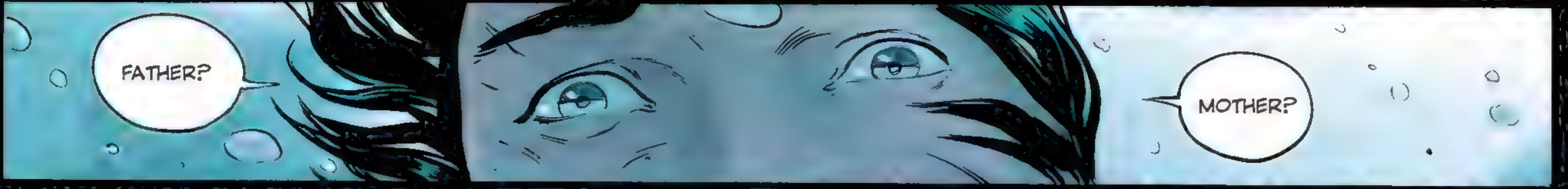
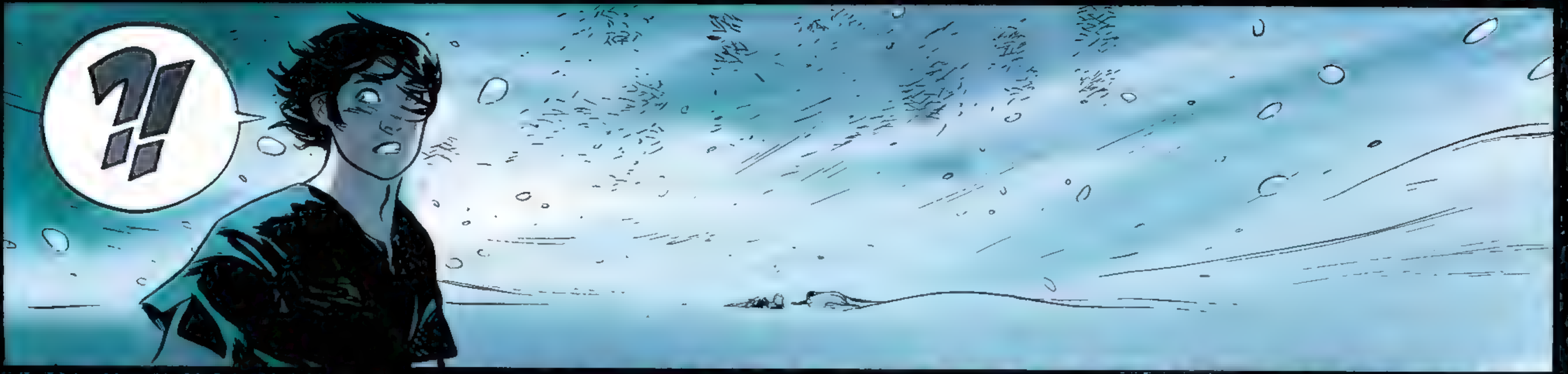
MY
PARENTS.

AS YOU
WISH.

THERE...
IS THAT
THEM?

YES, BUT DO
NOT LEAN IN
LIKE THAT...

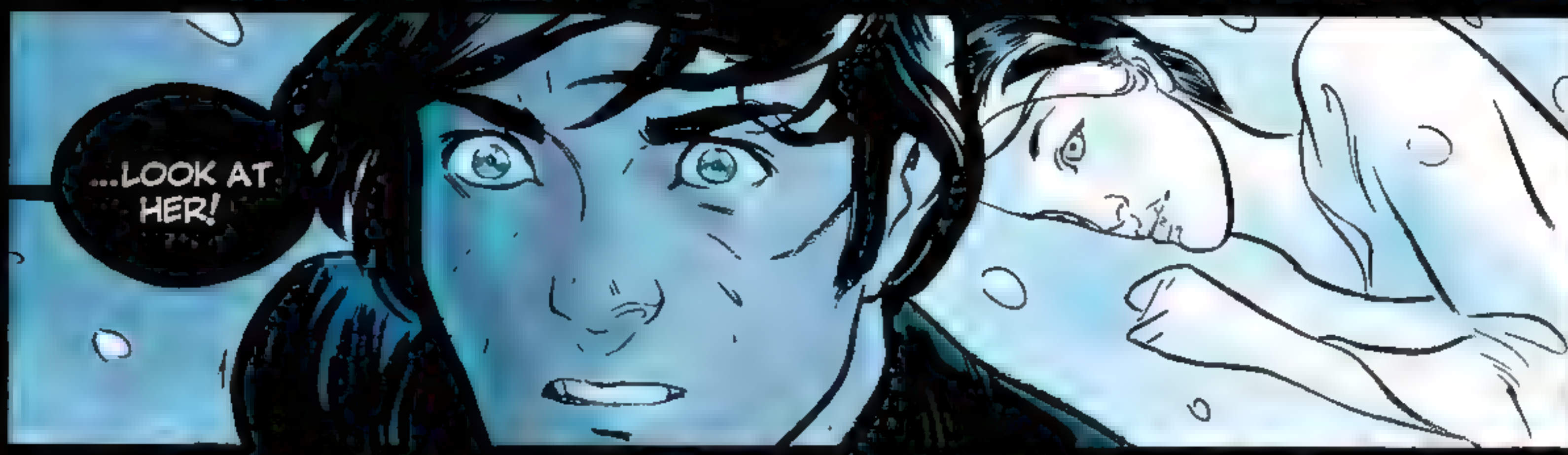
**SIEGFRIED!
BACK OFF!**



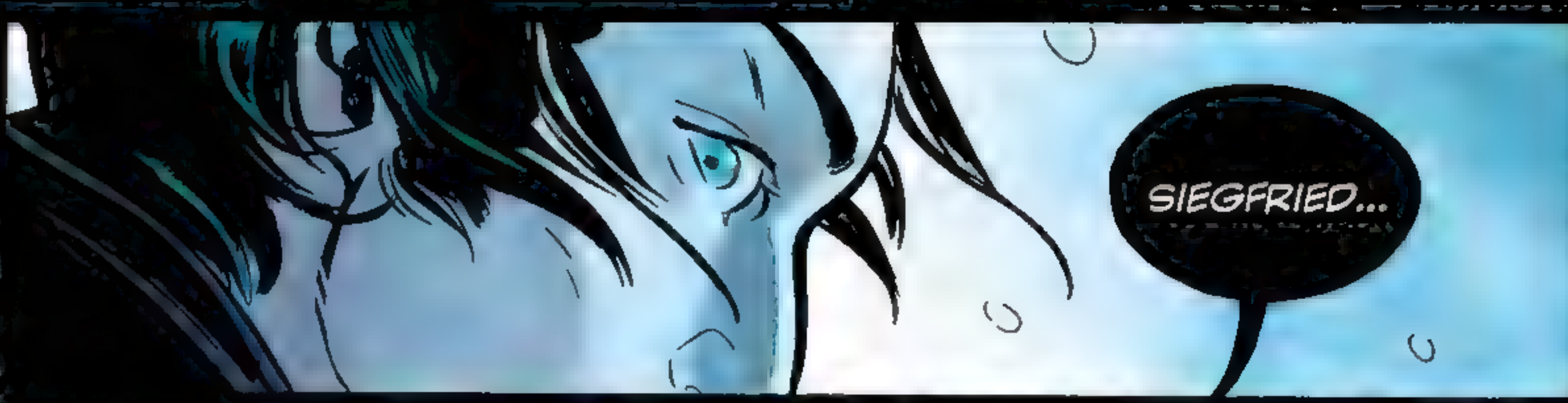


YOU
SHOULDN'T
BE HERE...

...LOOK AT
US...



...LOOK AT
HER!



SIEGFRIED...



MY
CHILD...

...GO BACK
TO WHERE
YOU WERE.



BACK!

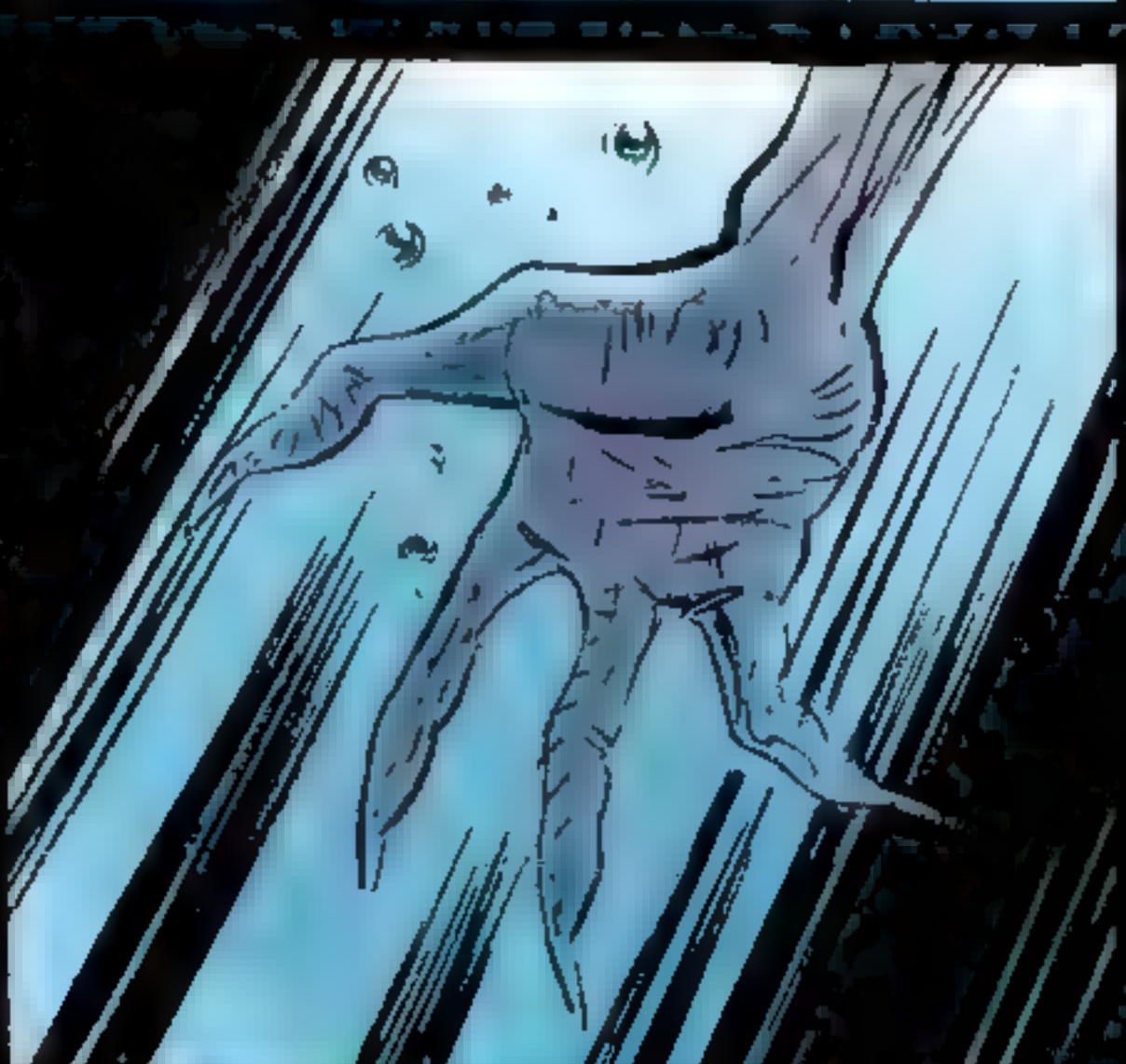
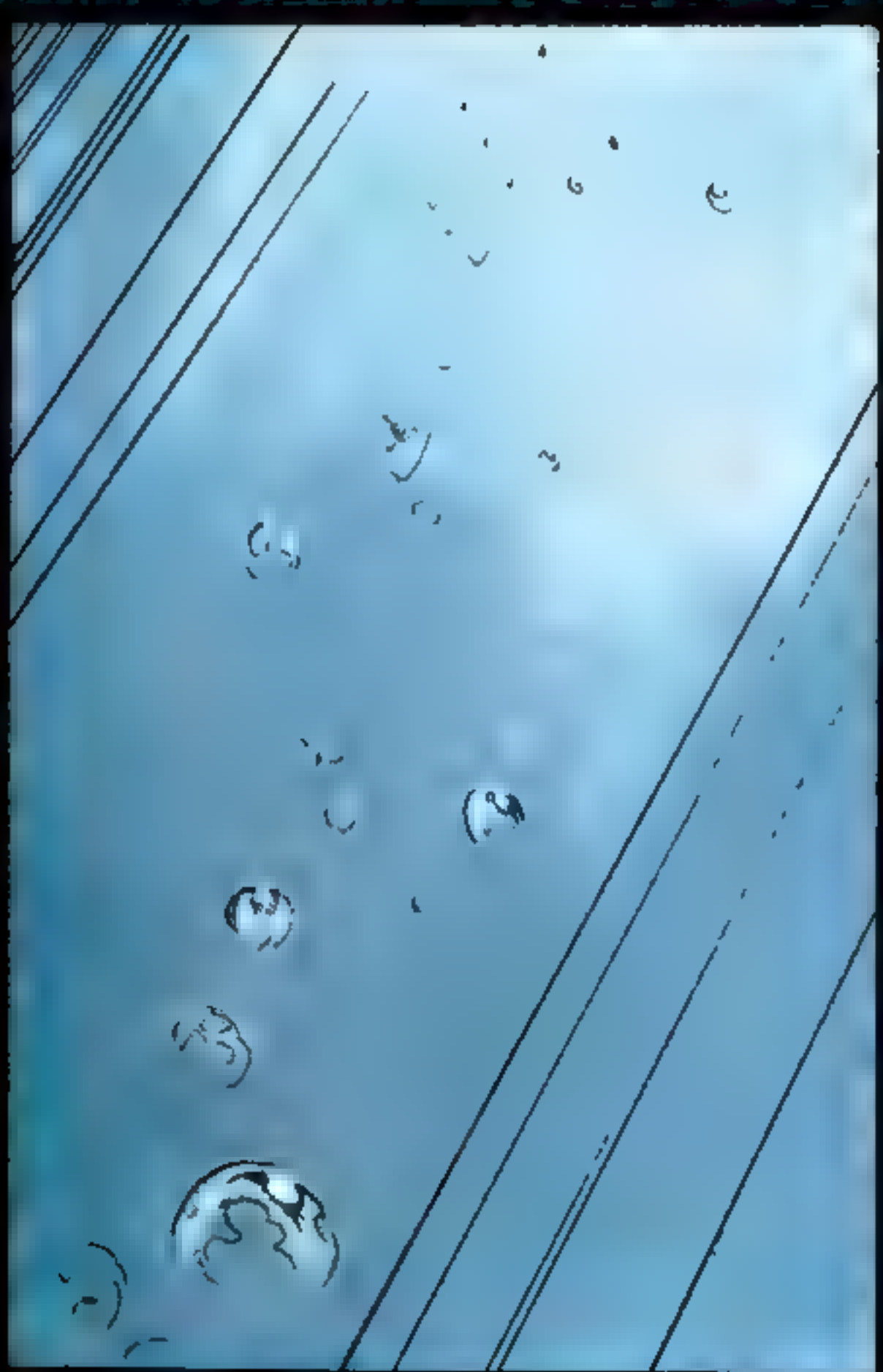
NO!!!

NOT THAT
WAY!

CRACK



HAVE YOU
LOST ALL
HOPE?



"NO FEAR"
HUH?!

SO, WHAT KEPT
YOU IN THE FOREST
ALL THESE YEARS?

WHAT IS STILL
HOLDING YOU
BACK NOW?

WHAT IS MAKING
YOU LIVE IN THE
PAST AND THE
REGRETS.

LIES,
WITCH!

MIME'S!
YOURS!

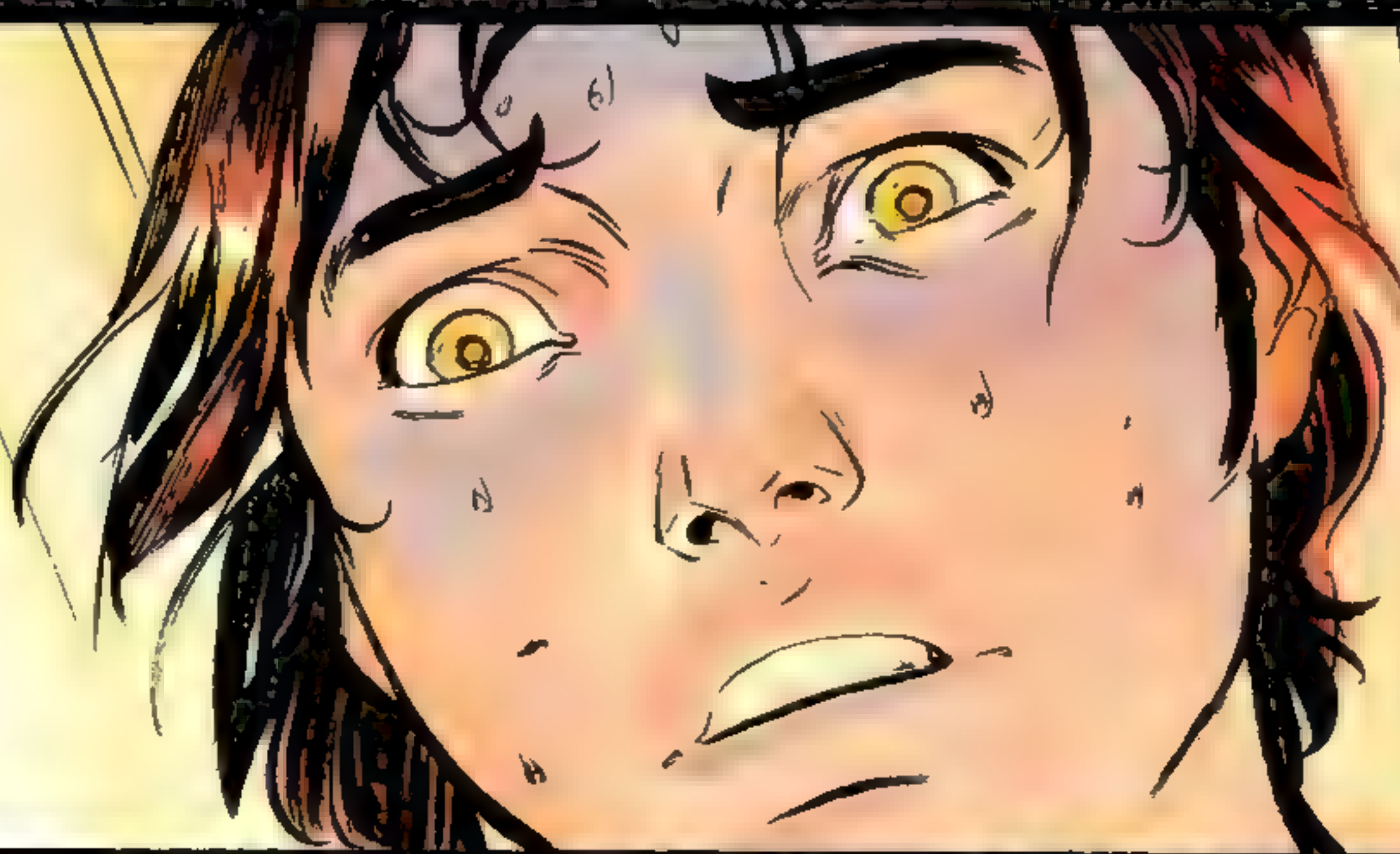
I NEVER
LIE,
MORTAL!

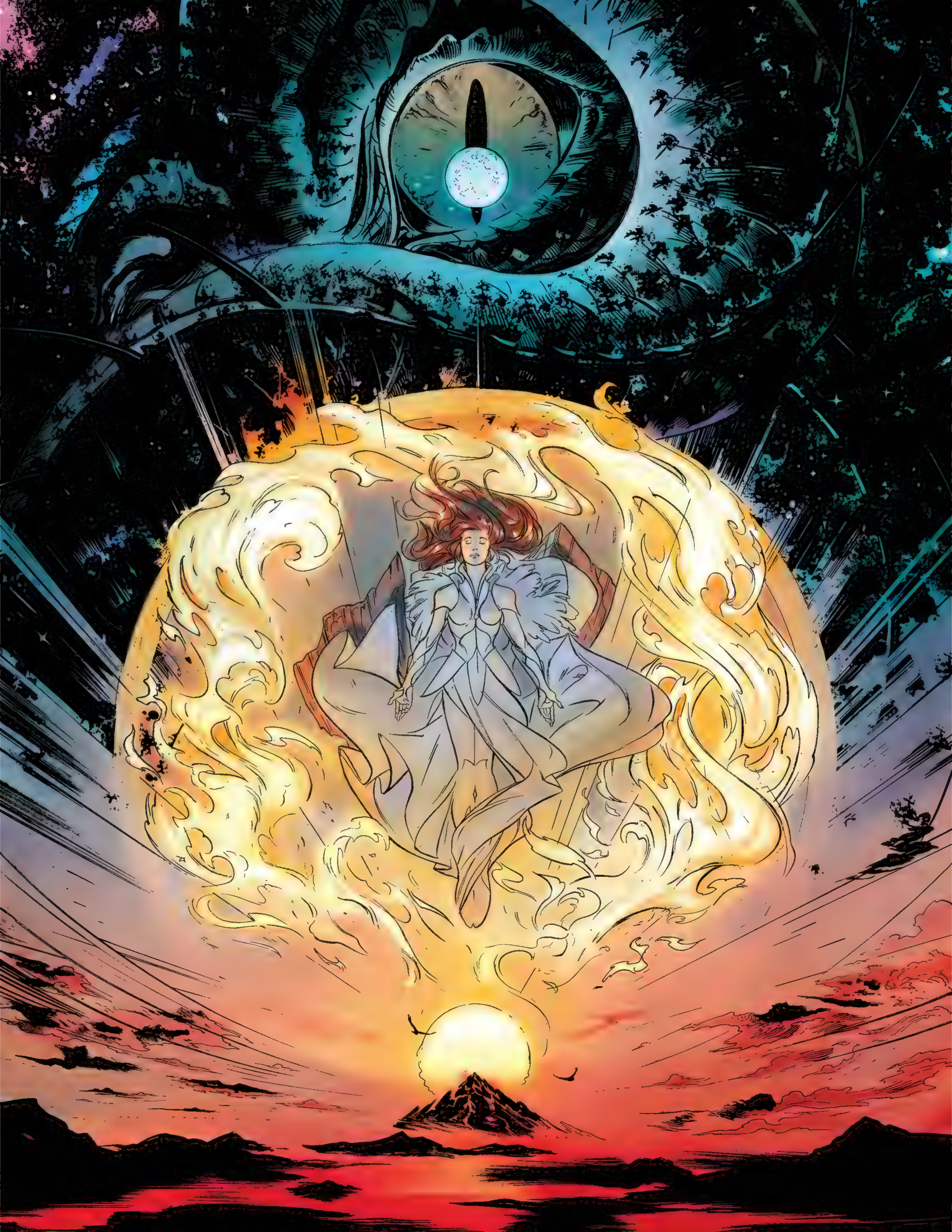
OKAY THEN TELL
ME HOW TO GET
OUT OF HERE!

YOU STILL DO NOT
UNDERSTAND? THE
WAY OUT IS IN YOUR
FUTURE...

...BUT ONLY IF YOU
HAVE THE **COURAGE**
TO FACE IT!

LOOK!







AH!

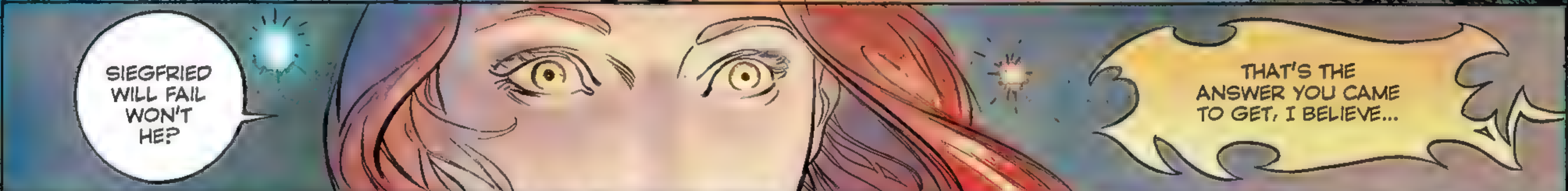
IT'S ME IN
THE MIDDLE
OF THE
FLAMES!

IT WILL
BE
YOU.

WHAT'S
GOING TO
HAPPEN TO
ME?

I CAN SHOW
YOU...

...BUT IS THAT
REALLY WHAT
YOU WANT?

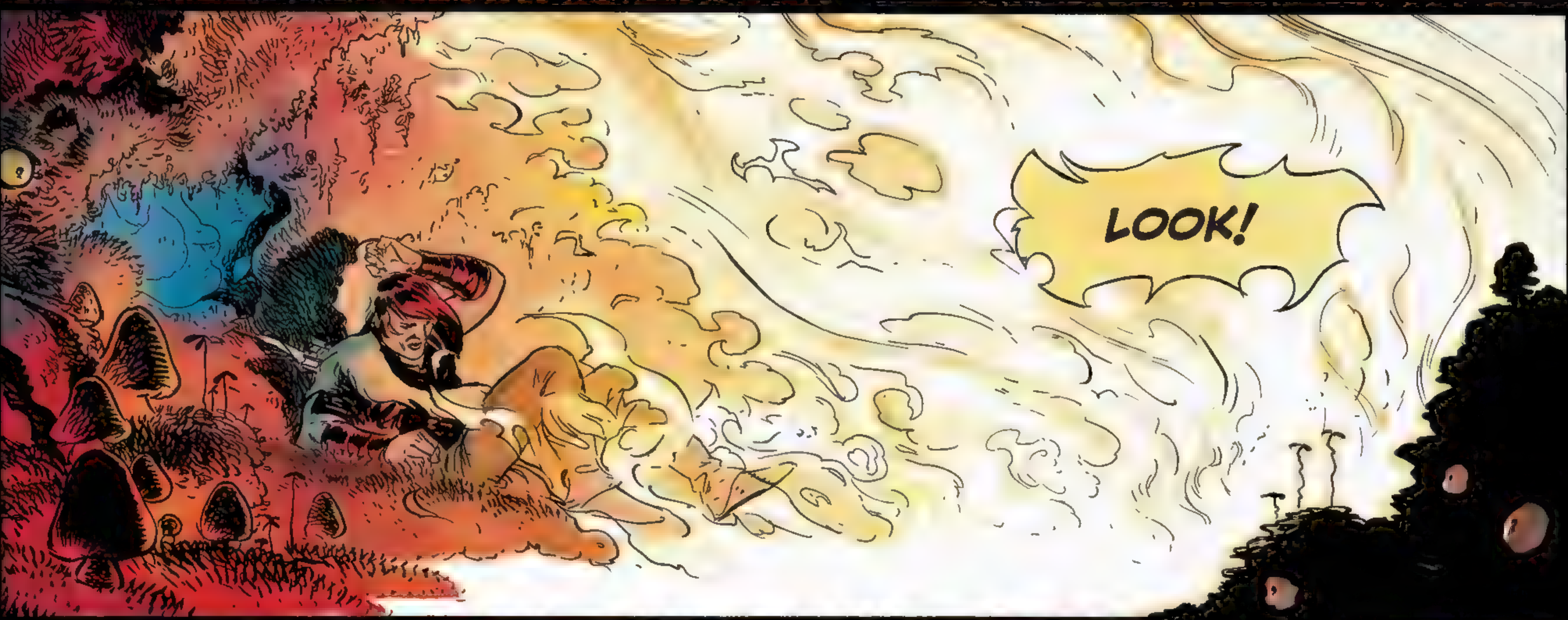


SIEGFRIED
WILL FAIL
WON'T HE?

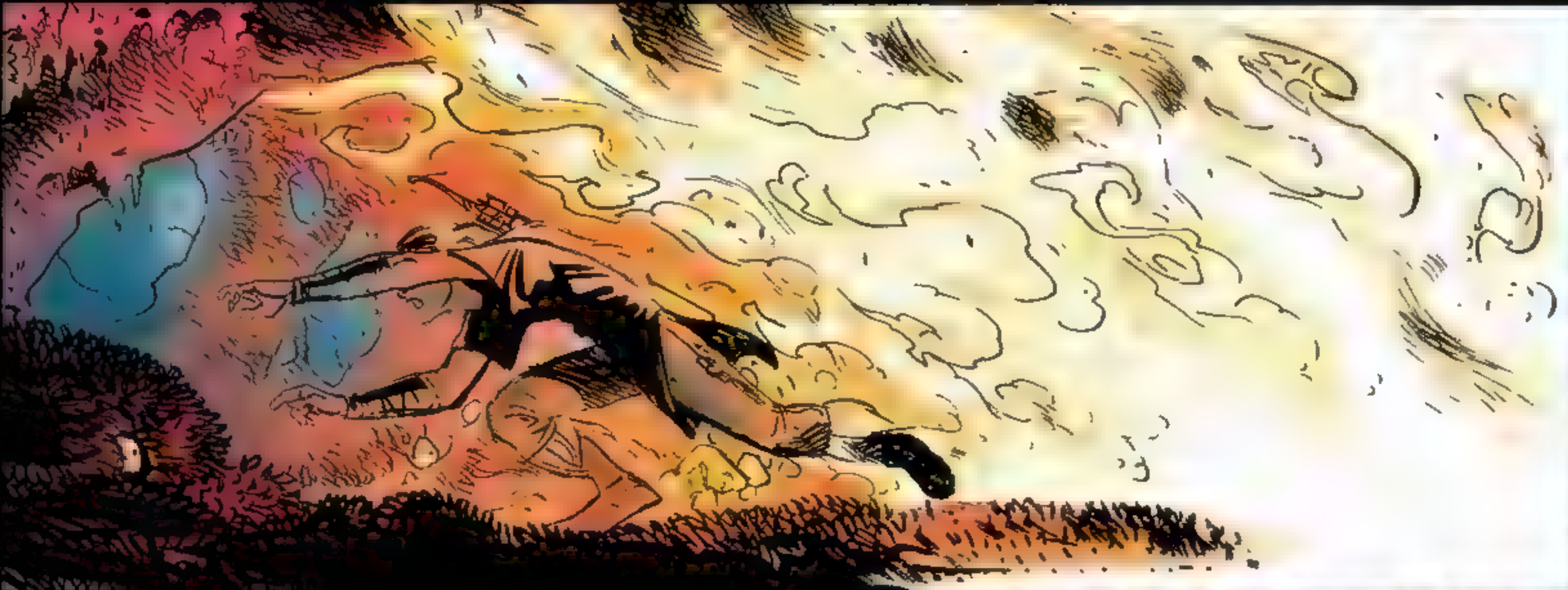
THAT'S THE
ANSWER YOU CAME
TO GET, I BELIEVE...

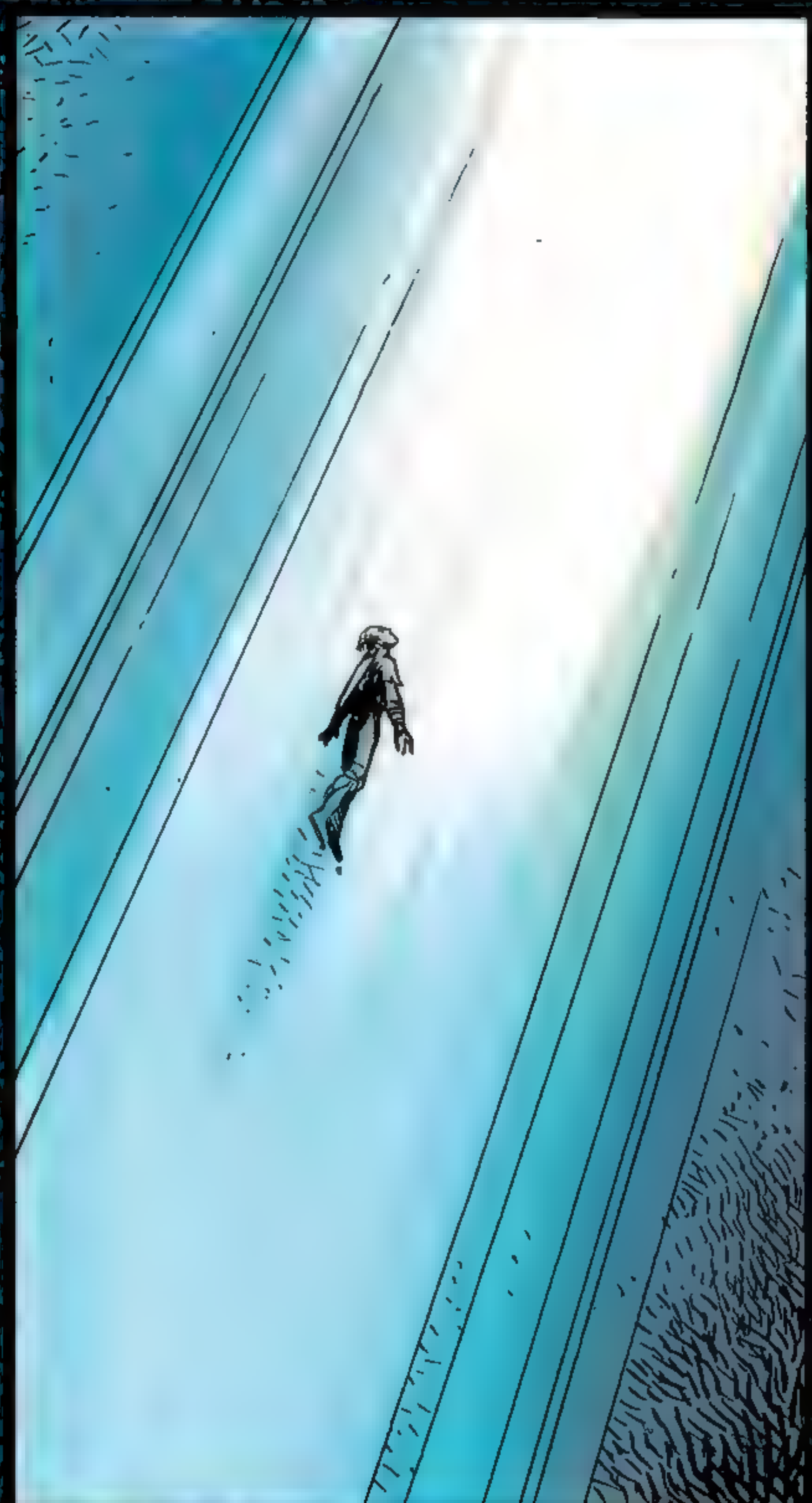
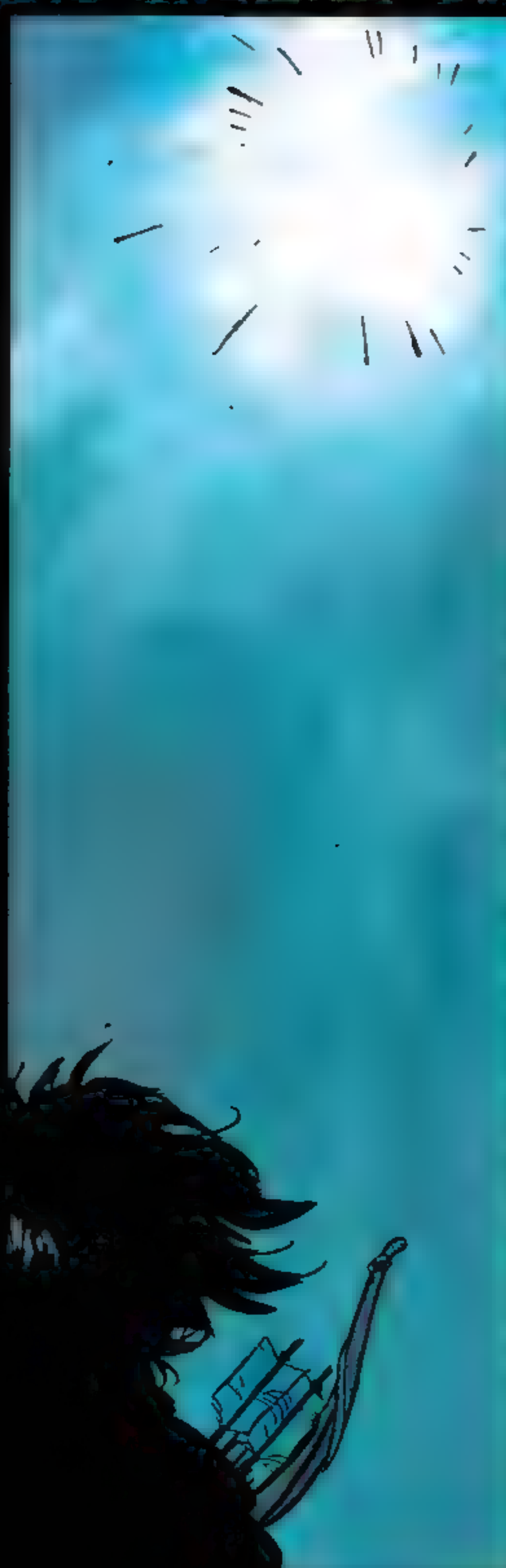
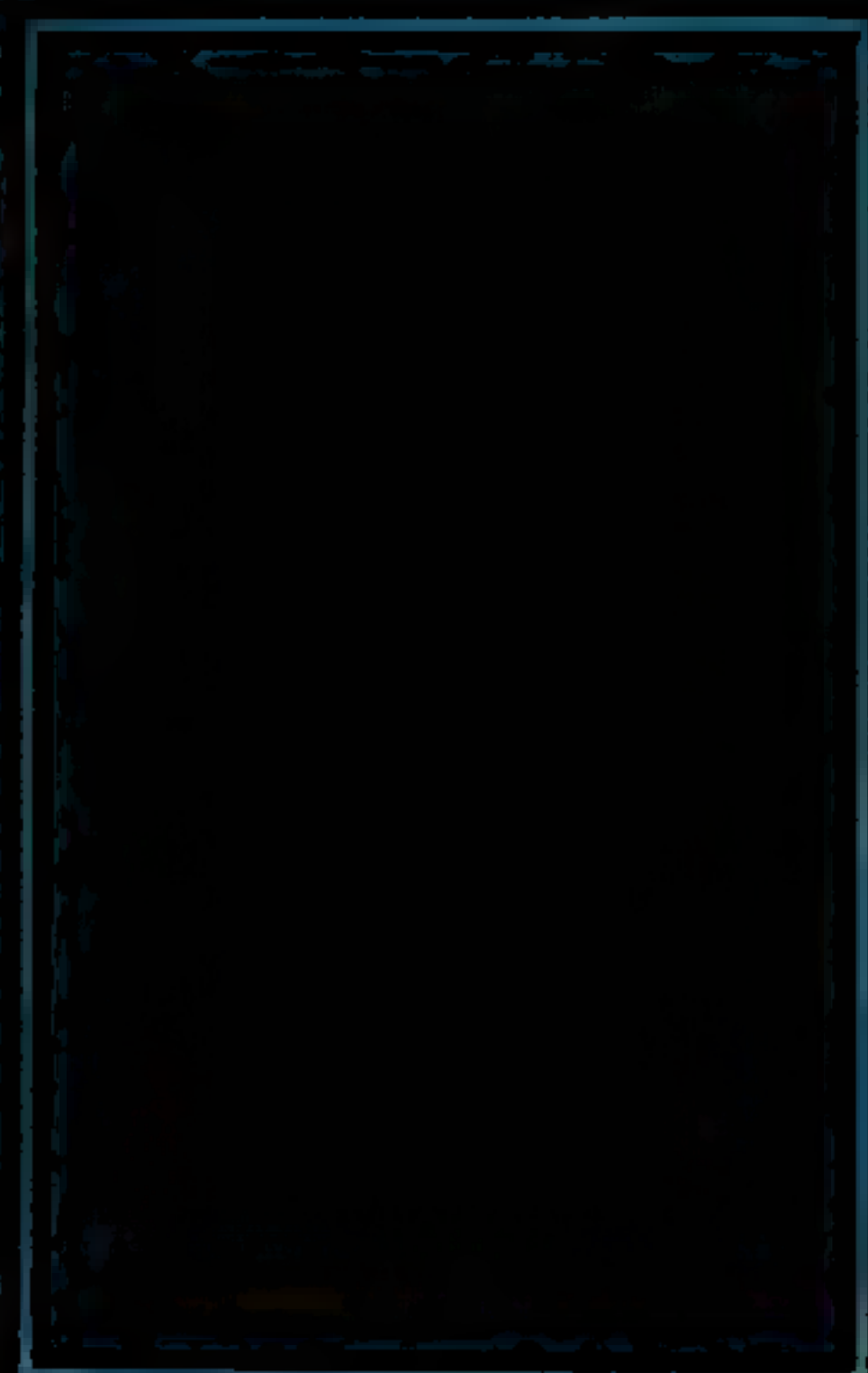
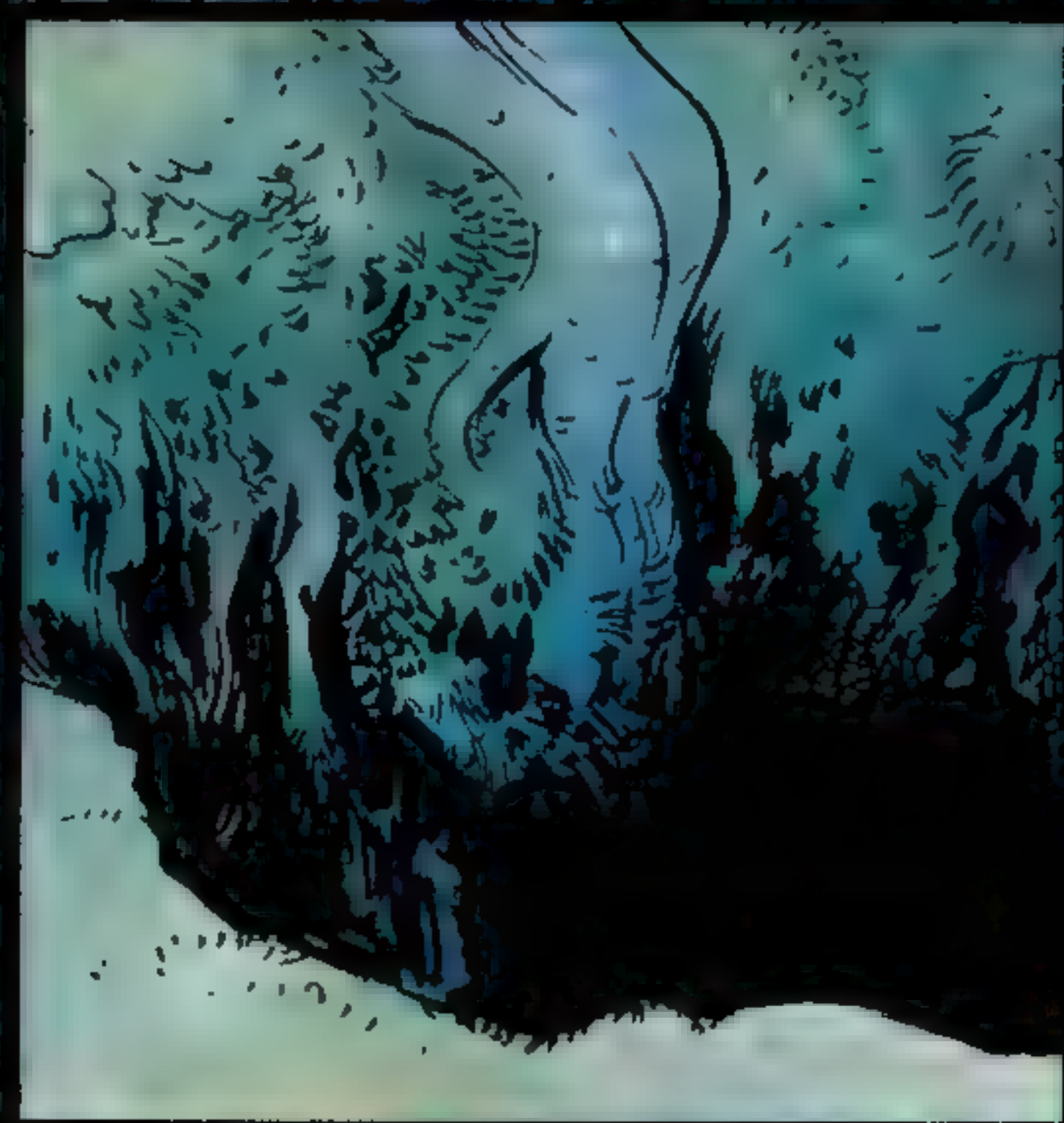
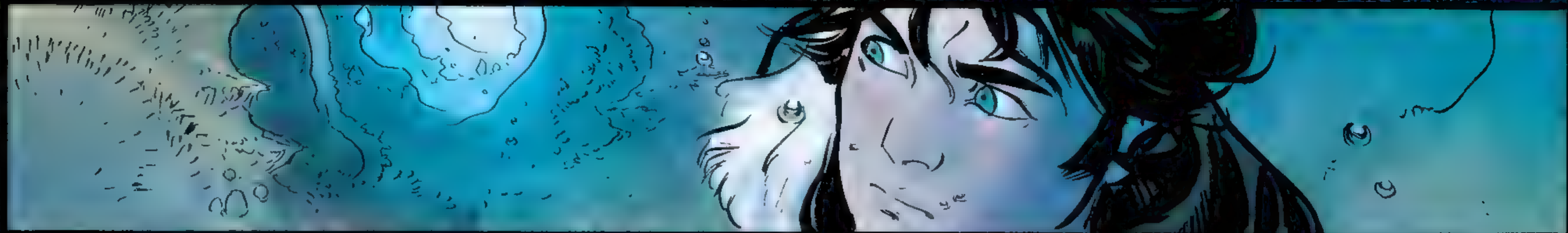
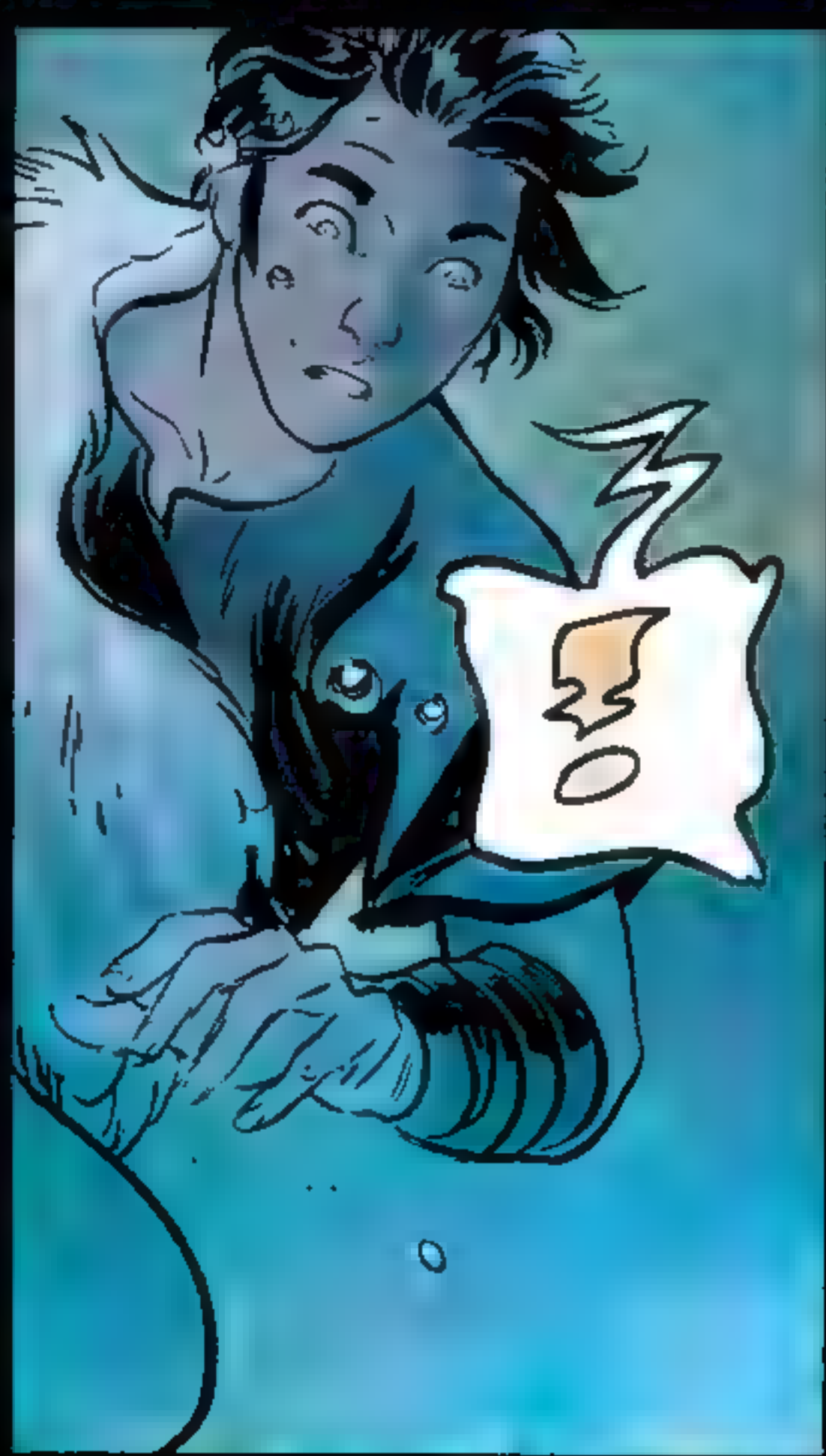
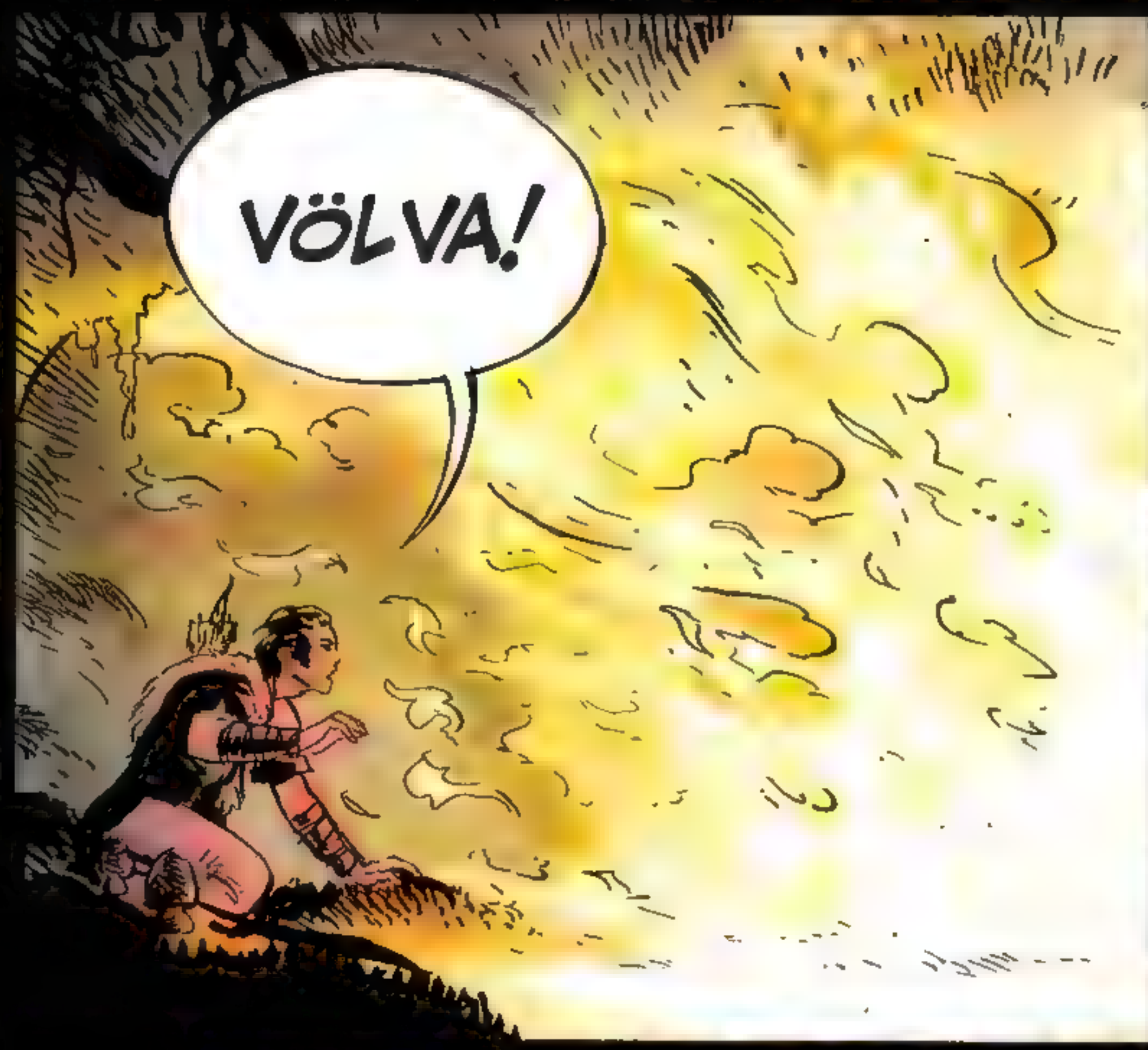


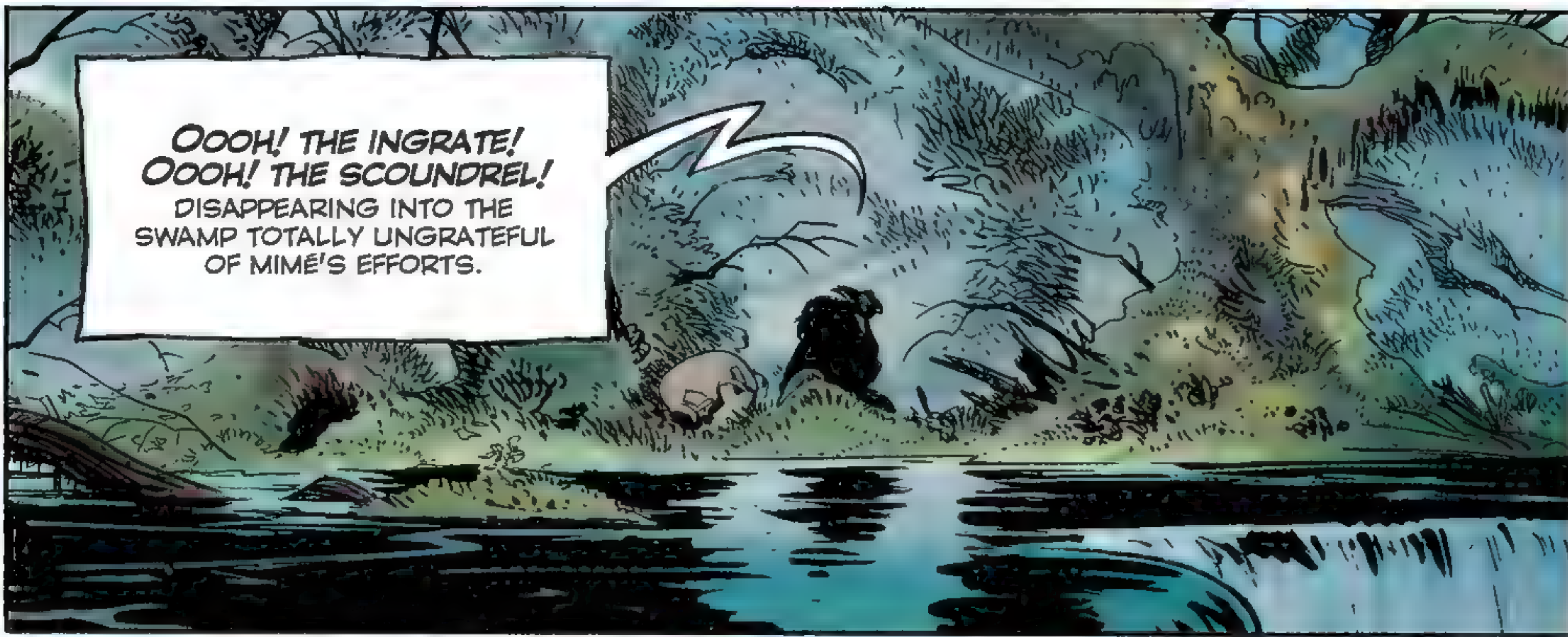
...WELL...



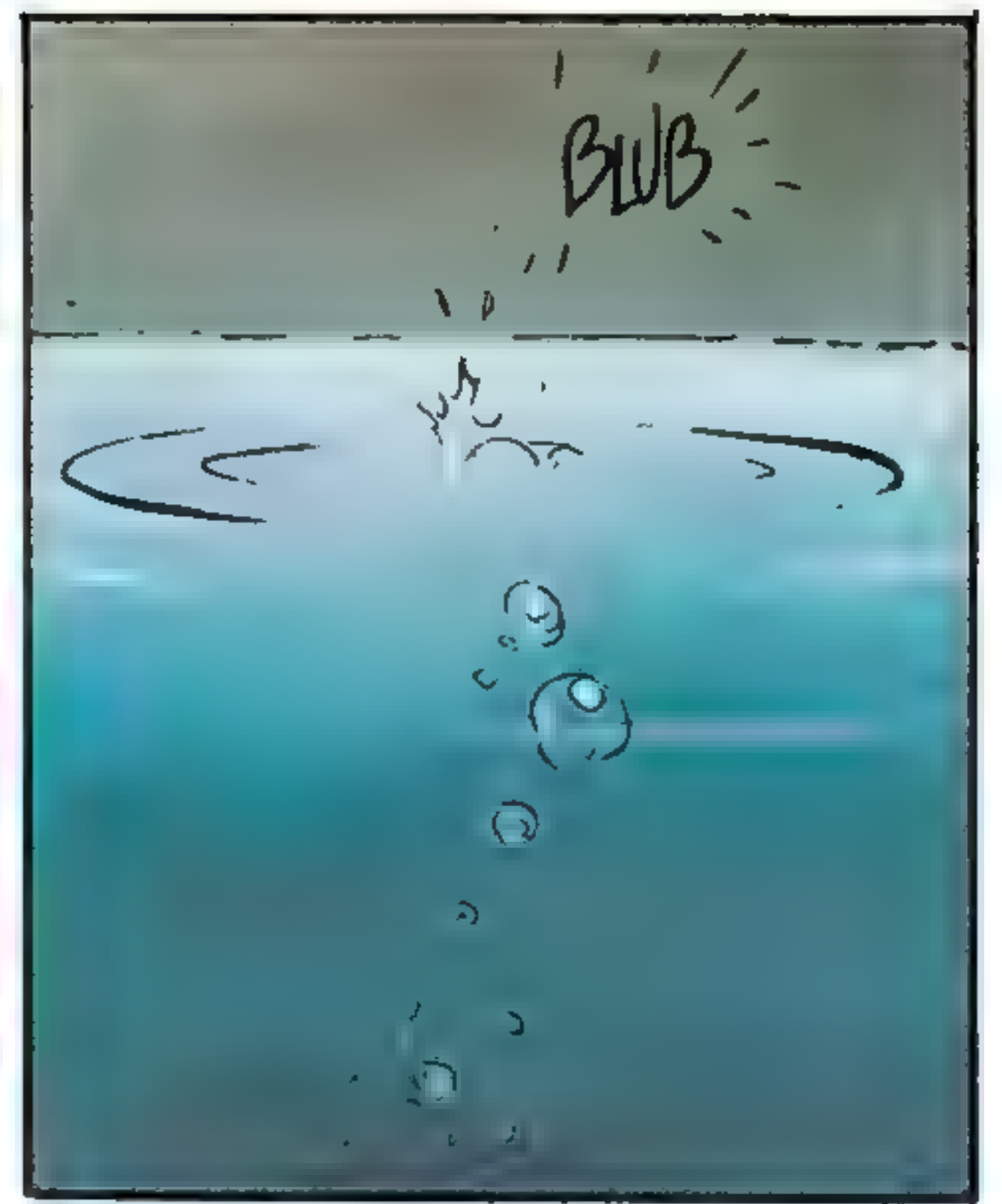
LOOK!







OOOH! THE INGRATE!
OOOH! THE SCOUNDREL!
DISAPPEARING INTO THE
SWAMP TOTALLY UNGRATEFUL
OF MIMÉ'S EFFORTS.



BLUB

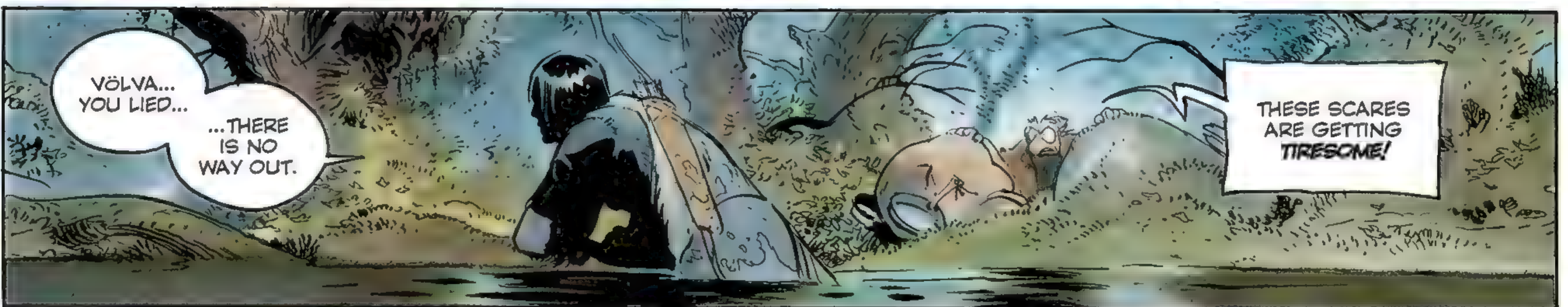


AH!



HF

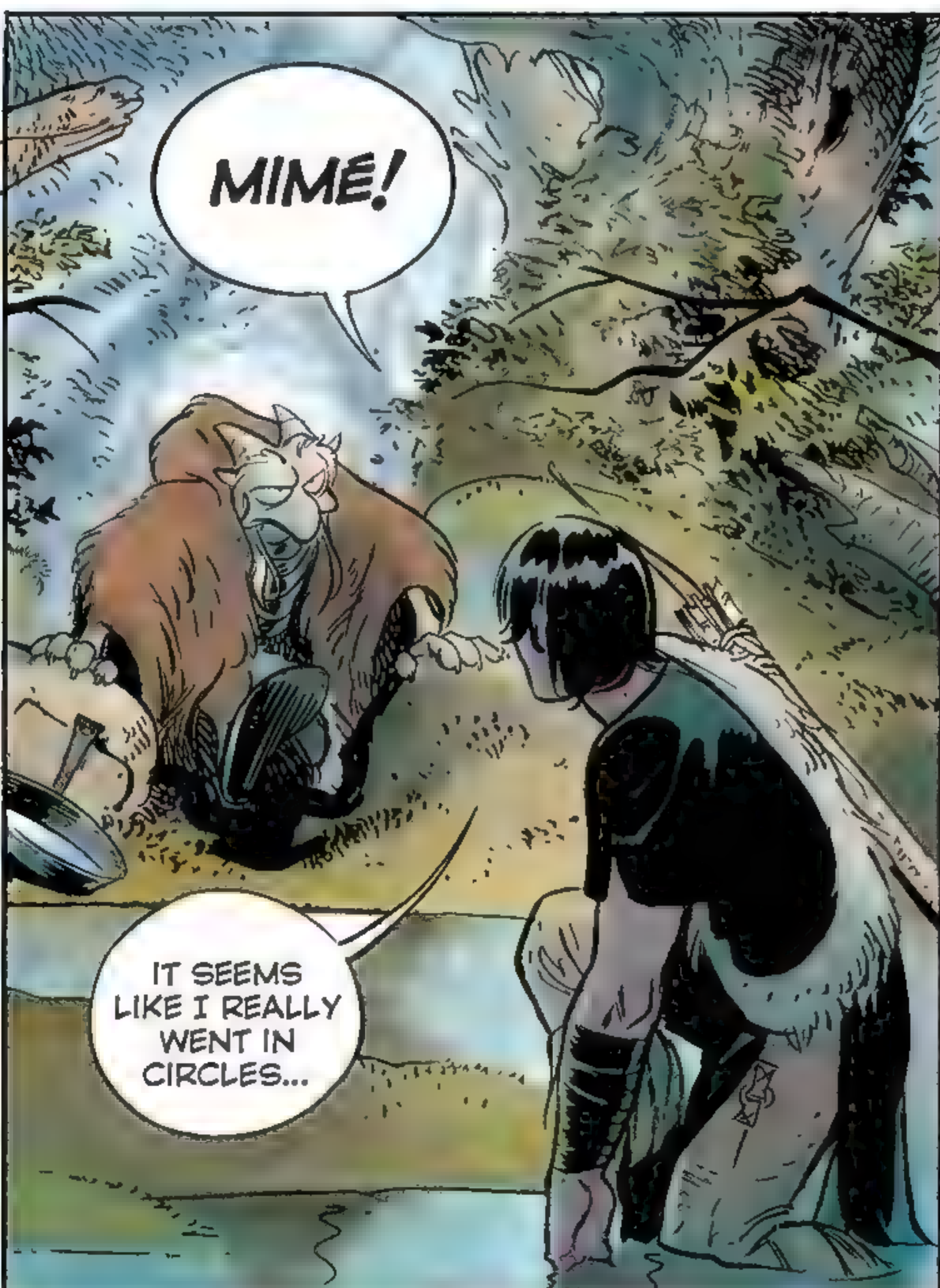
HH



VÖLVA...
YOU LIED...

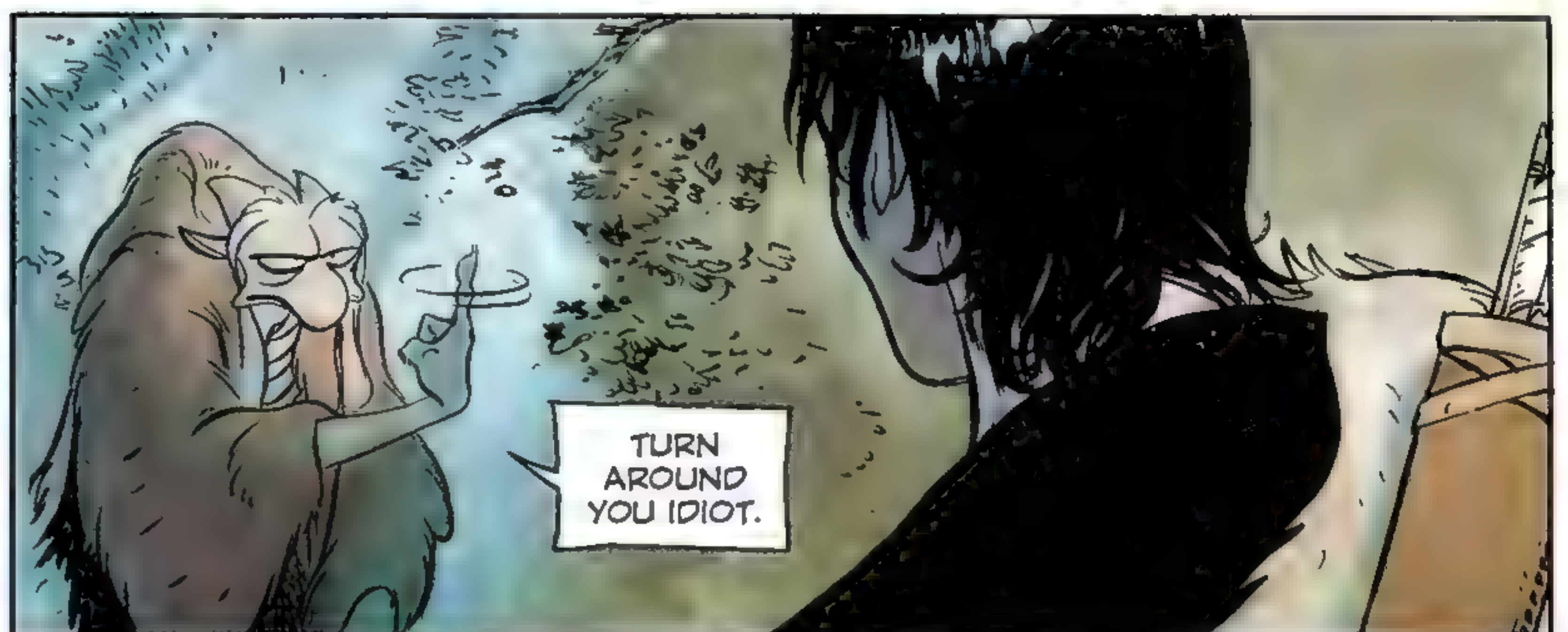
...THERE
IS NO
WAY OUT.

THESE SCARES
ARE GETTING
TIRESOME!

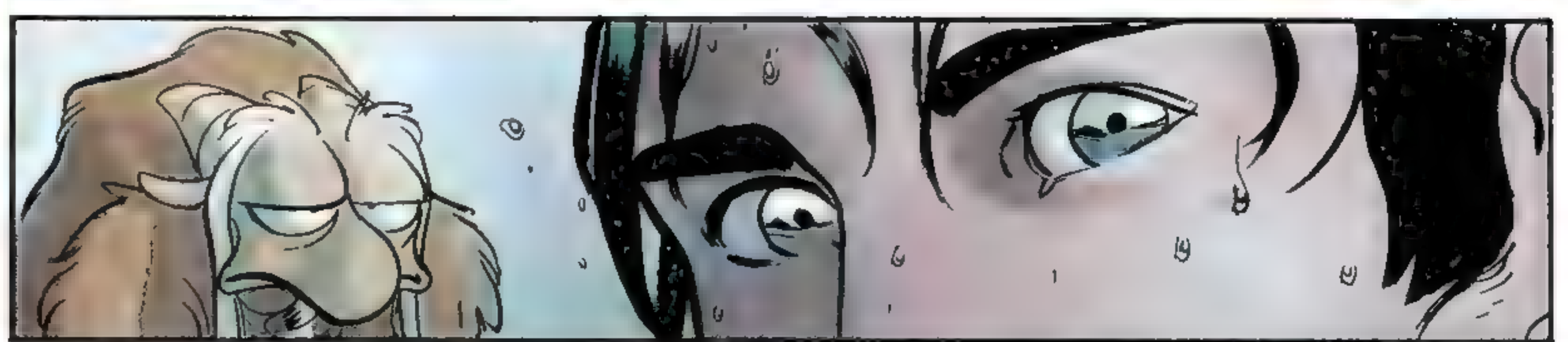


MIMÉ!

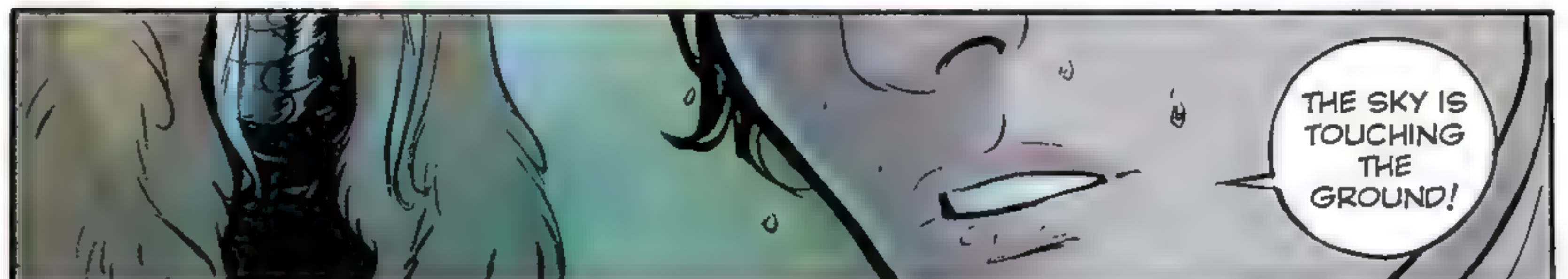
IT SEEMS
LIKE I REALLY
WENT IN
CIRCLES...



TURN
AROUND
YOU IDIOT.



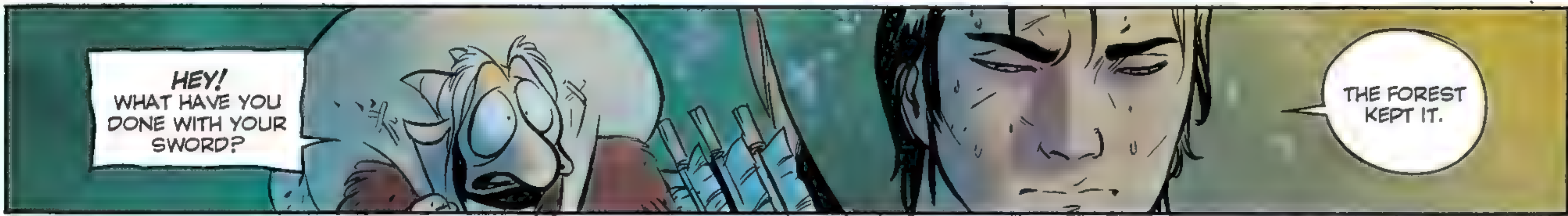
THE SKY IS
TOUCHING
THE
GROUND!





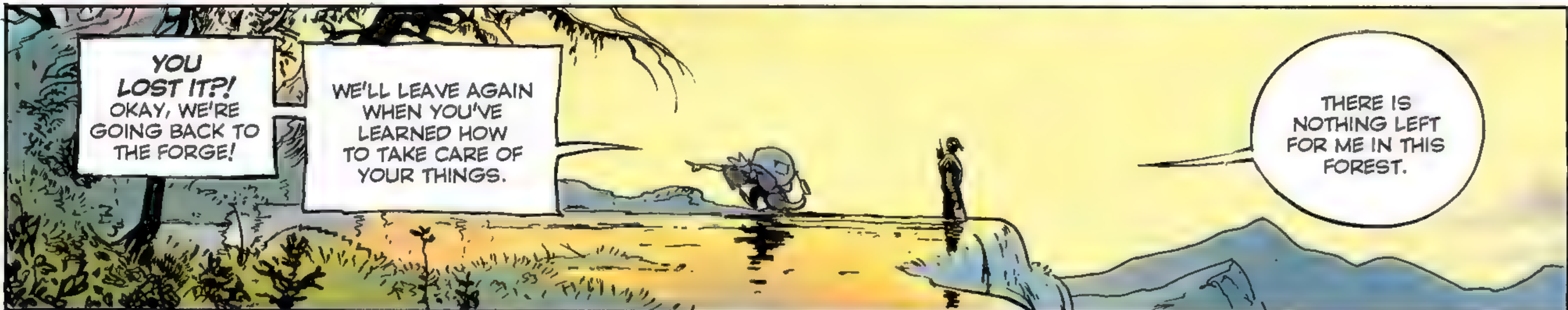
I NEVER
IMAGINED THAT
IT COULD BE
SO VAST.

YOU DO NOT
WANT TO
BELIEVE MINE,
THAT'S YOUR
PROBLEM!



HEY!
WHAT HAVE YOU
DONE WITH YOUR
SWORD?

THE FOREST
KEPT IT.



YOU
LOST IT?
OKAY, WE'RE
GOING BACK TO
THE FORGE!

WE'LL LEAVE AGAIN
WHEN YOU'VE
LEARNED HOW
TO TAKE CARE OF
YOUR THINGS.

THERE IS
NOTHING LEFT
FOR ME IN THIS
FOREST.



YOU WANT ME
TO KILL YOUR
DRAGON?

I'M
READY.



BUT YOU'RE
GOING TO
NEED A
WEAPON!

I'LL NEED
THREE!

BUT IT'S A
LONG WAY TO
THE LAND OF
FOG...

...WHO
KNOWS WHAT
WE'LL FIND
ALONG THE
WAY?

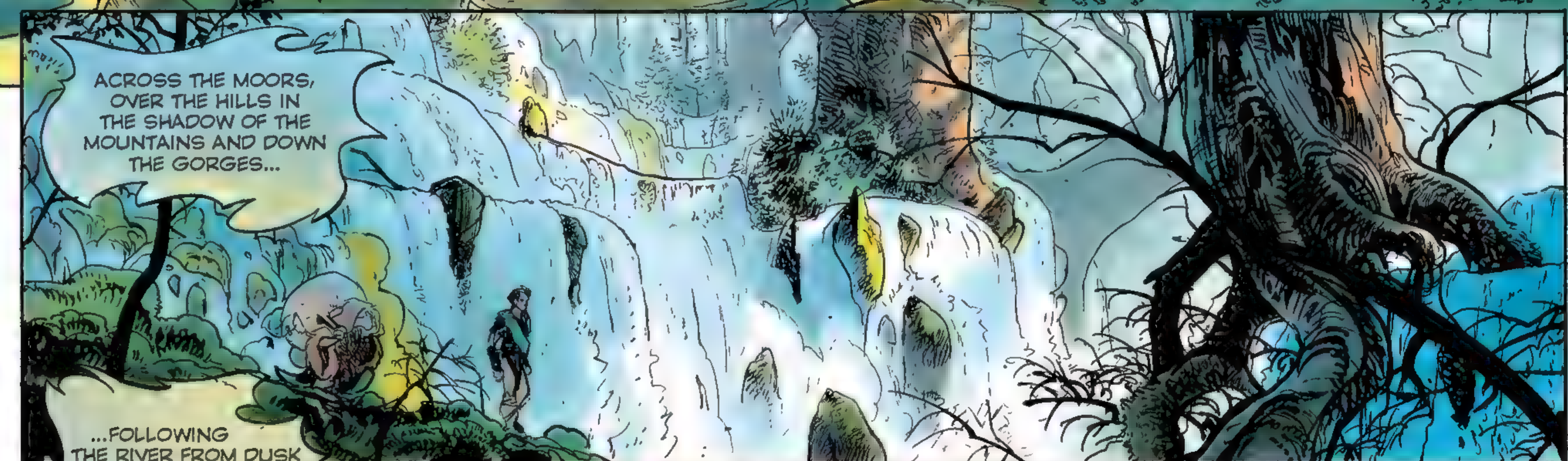


CRAZY!
THE WITCH MADE
HIM CRAZY!

THE
WITCH?

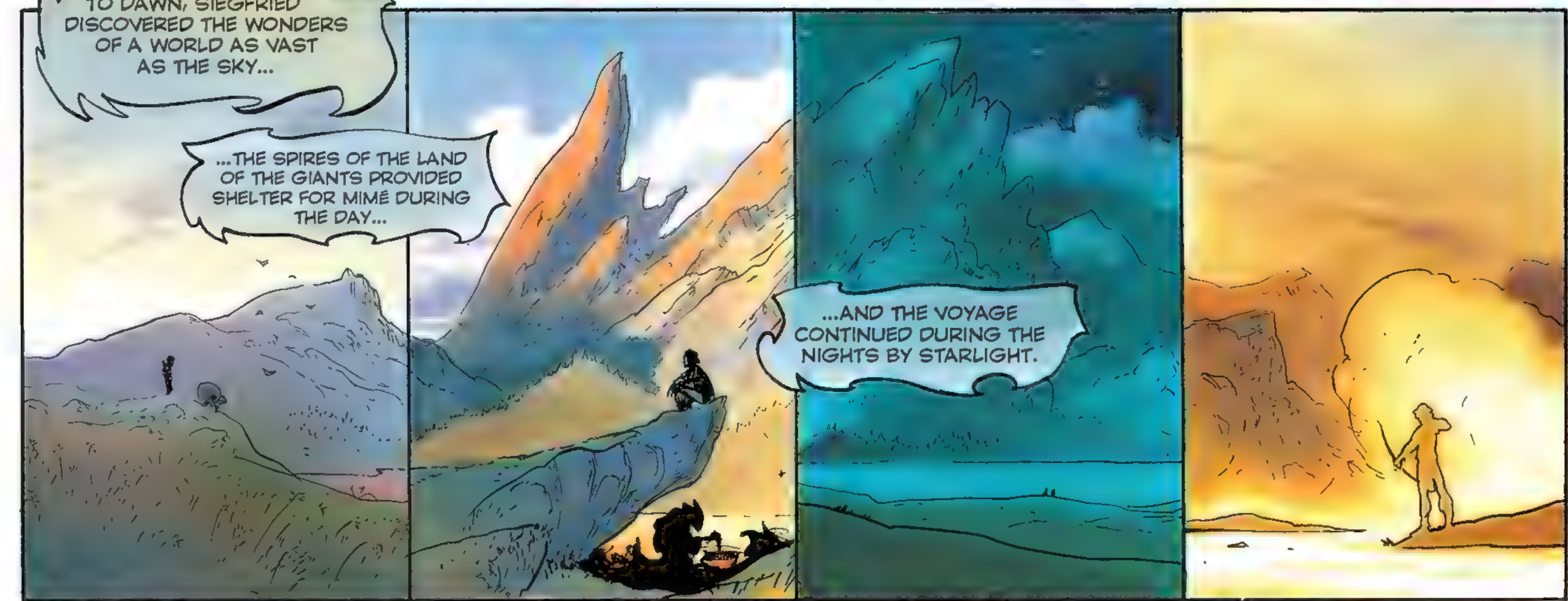


THERE'S NO
WITCH!



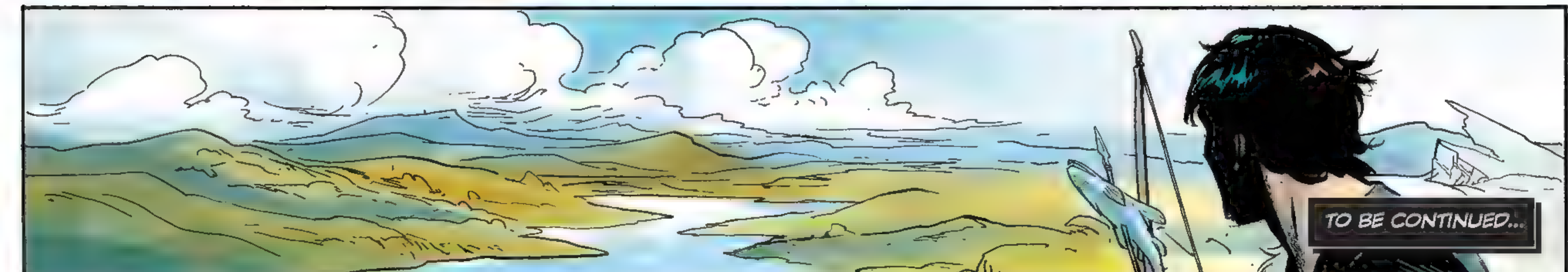
ACROSS THE MOORS,
OVER THE HILLS IN
THE SHADOW OF THE
MOUNTAINS AND DOWN
THE GORGES...

...FOLLOWING
THE RIVER FROM DUSK
TO DAWN, SIEGFRIED
DISCOVERED THE WONDERS
OF A WORLD AS VAST
AS THE SKY...



...THE SPIRES OF THE LAND
OF THE GIANTS PROVIDED
SHELTER FOR MINE DURING
THE DAY...

...AND THE VOYAGE
CONTINUED DURING THE
NIGHTS BY STARLIGHT.



TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT

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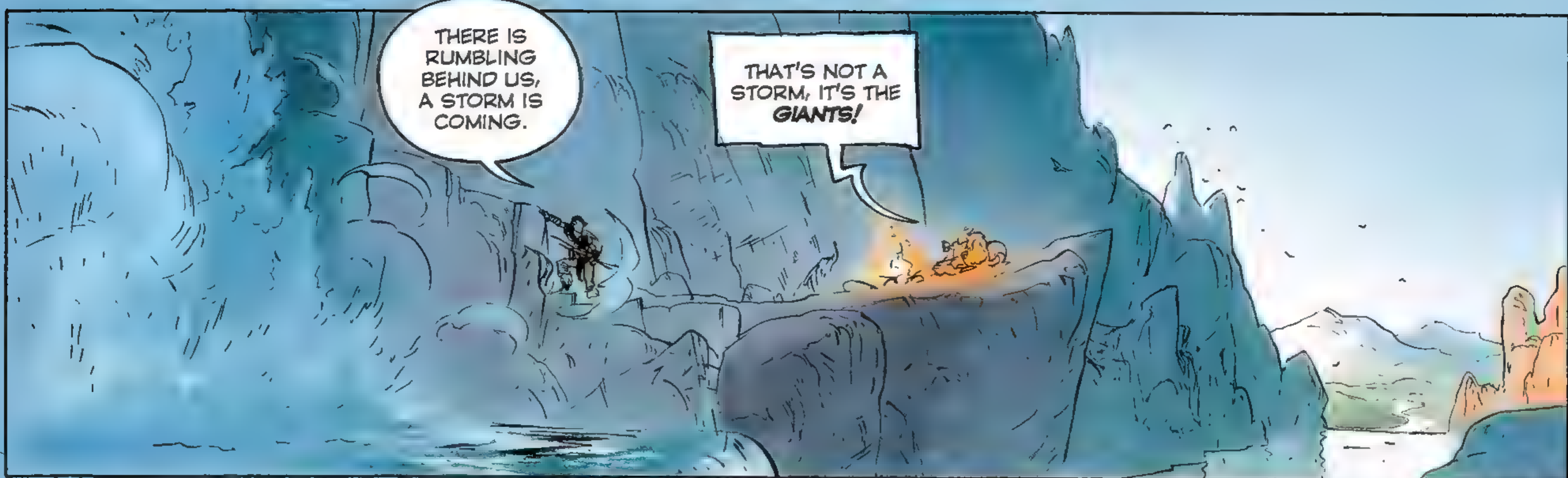
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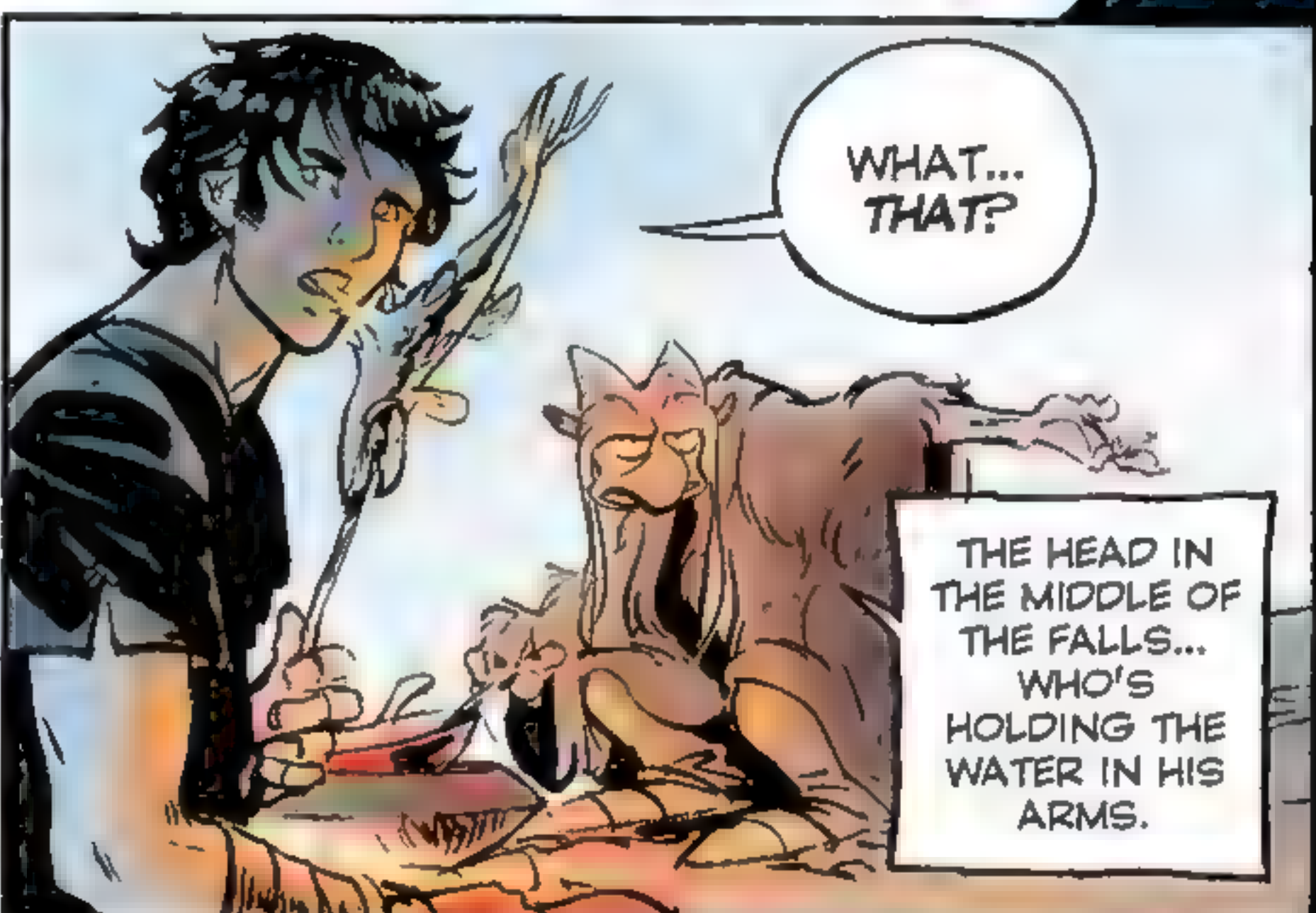
THERE IS RUMBLING BEHIND US, A STORM IS COMING.

THAT'S NOT A STORM, IT'S THE GIANTS!



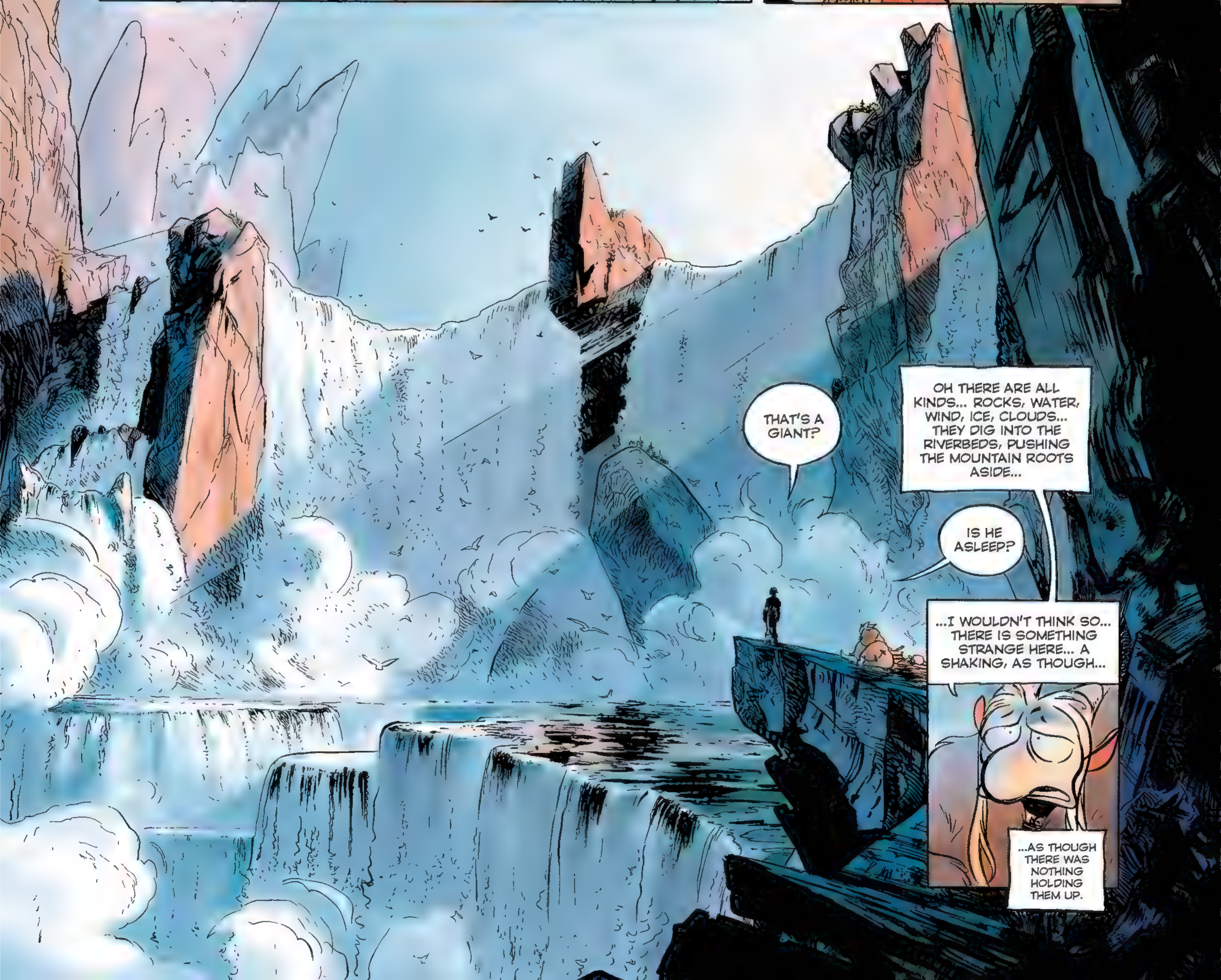
WHAT GIANTS? WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR LAND AND WE HAVEN'T SEEN A SINGLE ONE!

AND THAT THING?



WHAT... THAT?

THE HEAD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FALLS... WHO'S HOLDING THE WATER IN HIS ARMS.

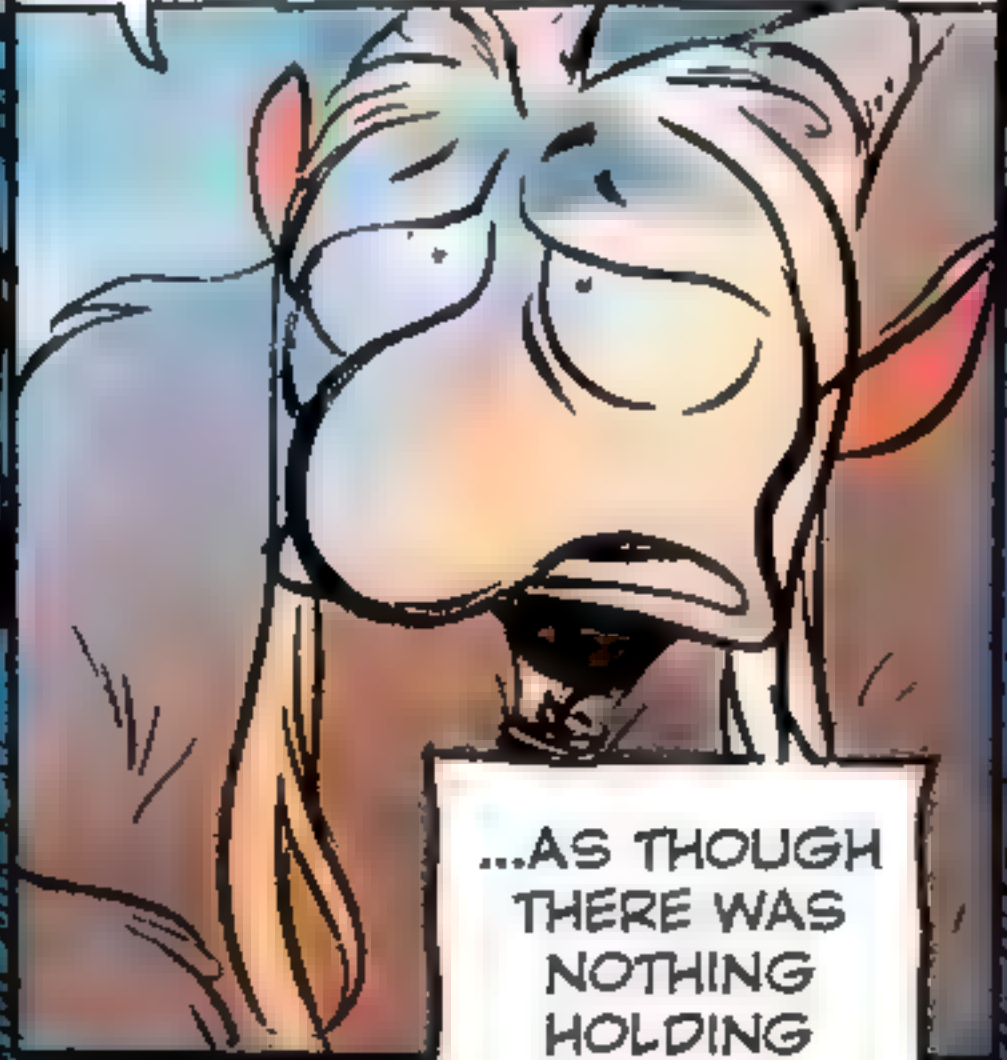


THAT'S A GIANT?

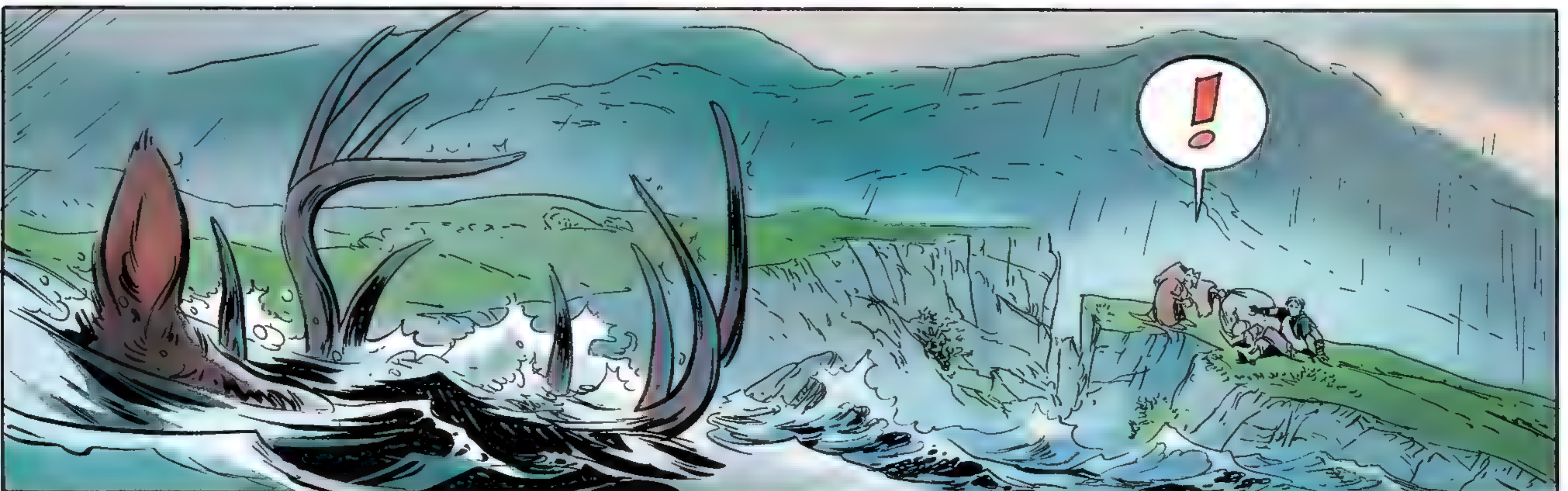
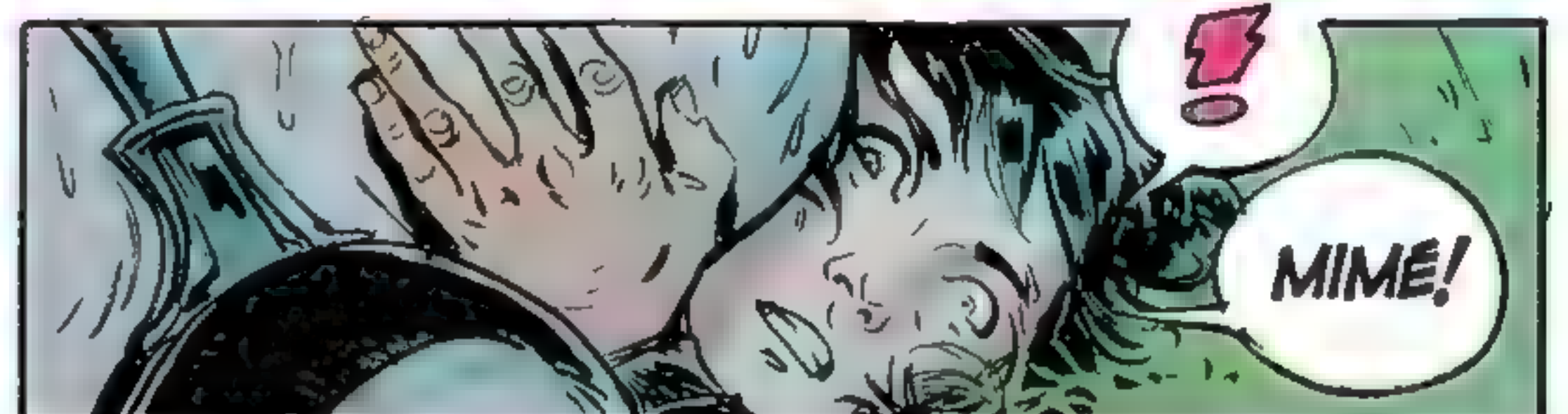
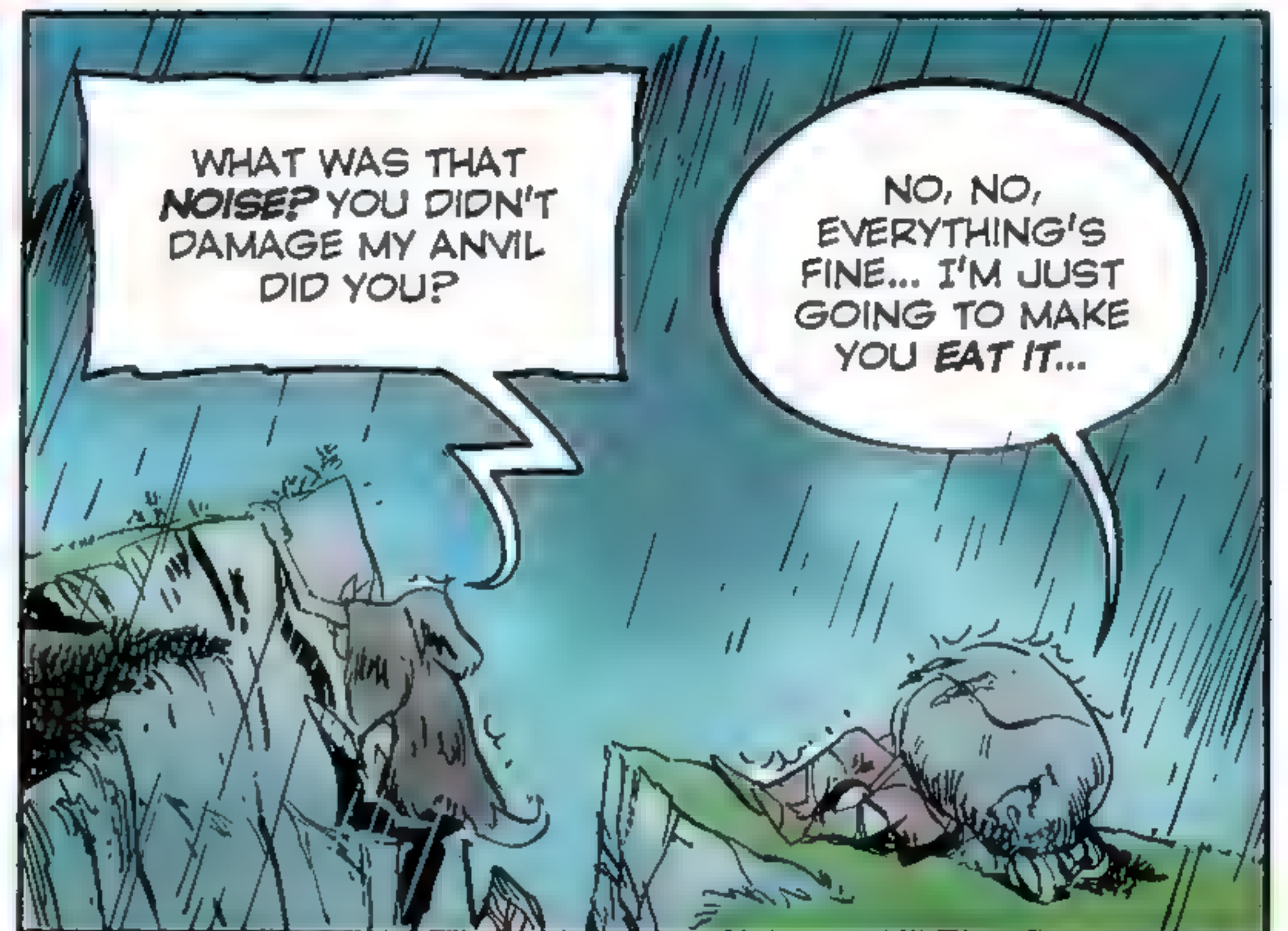
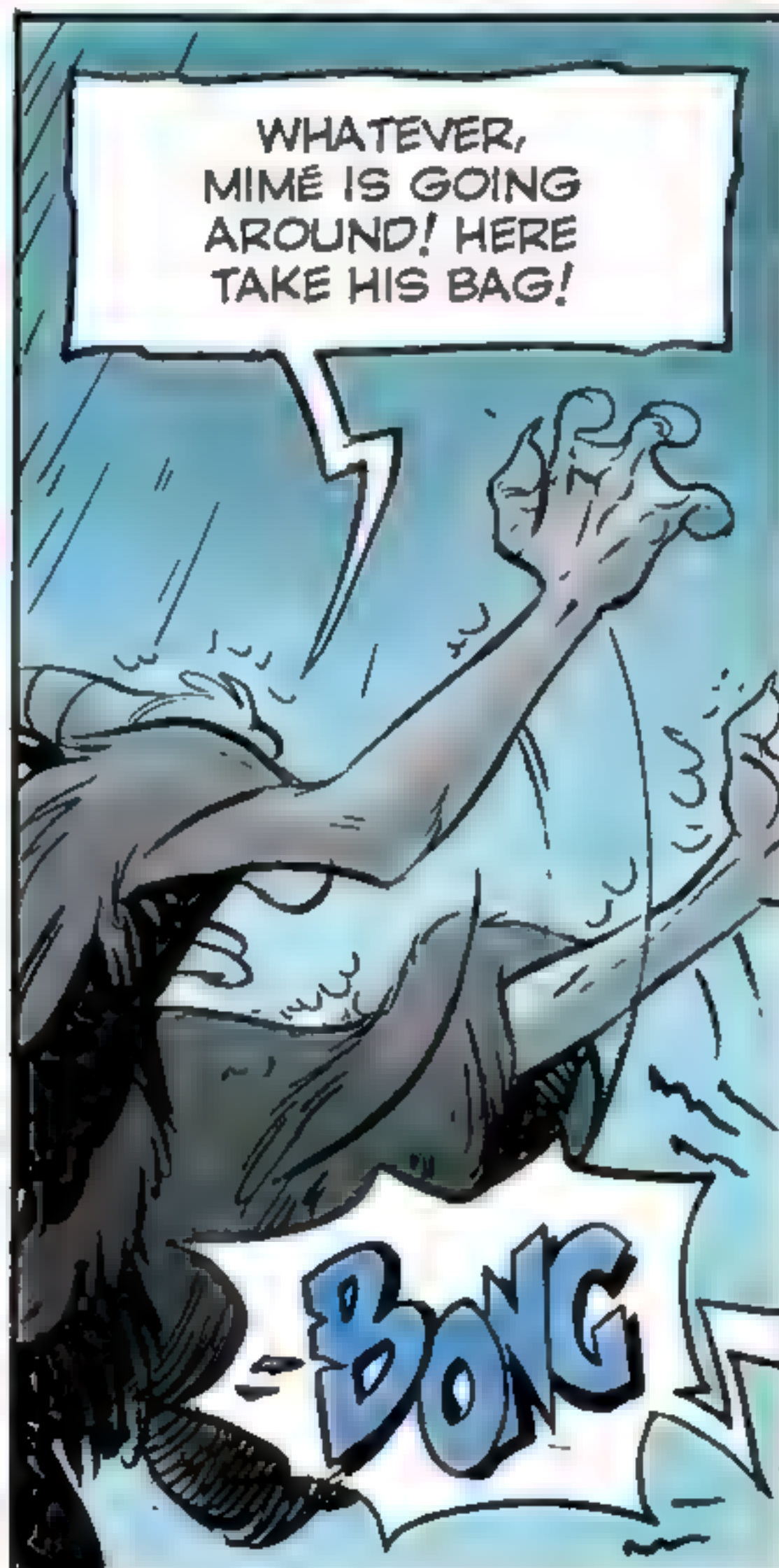
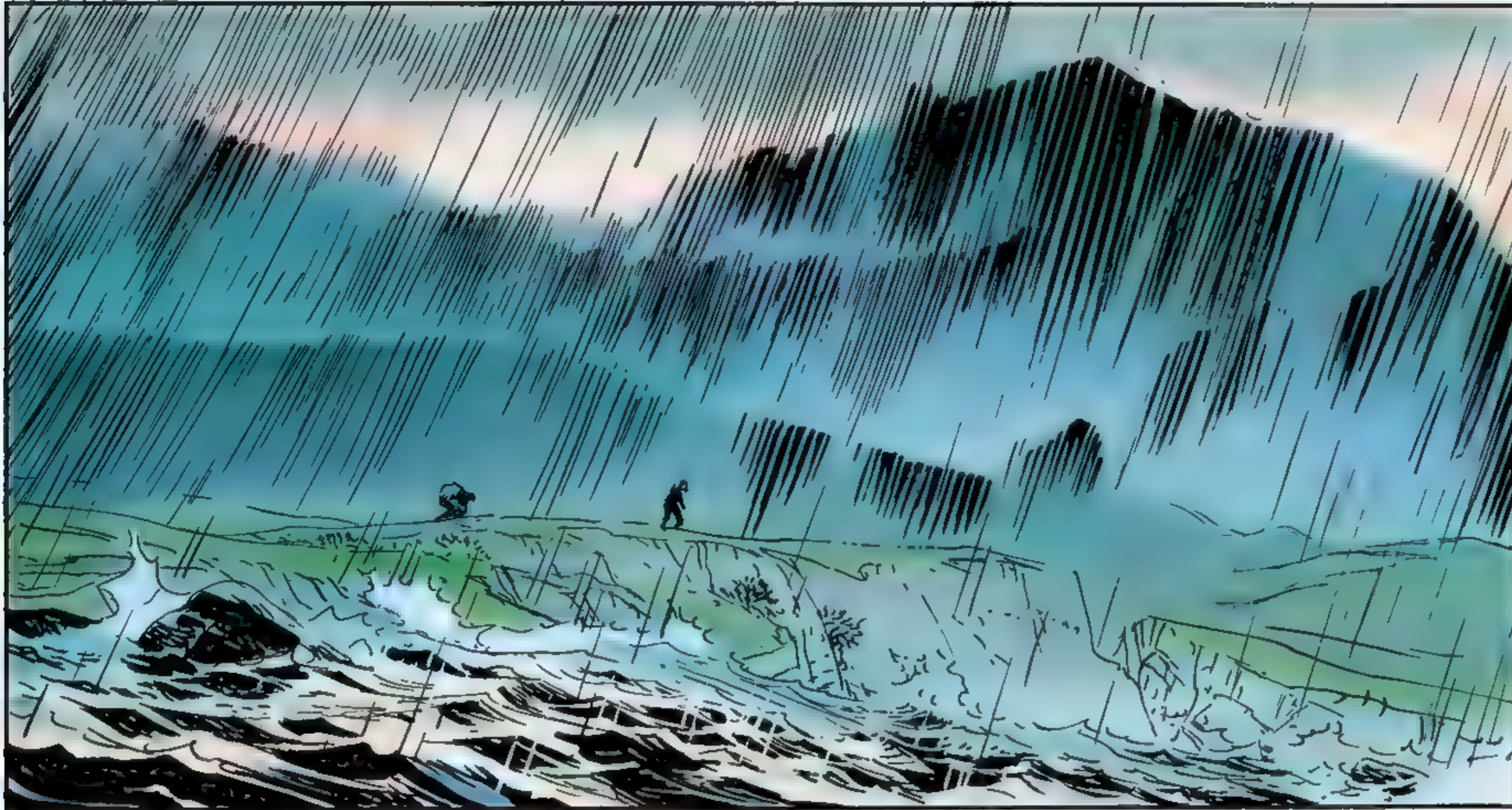
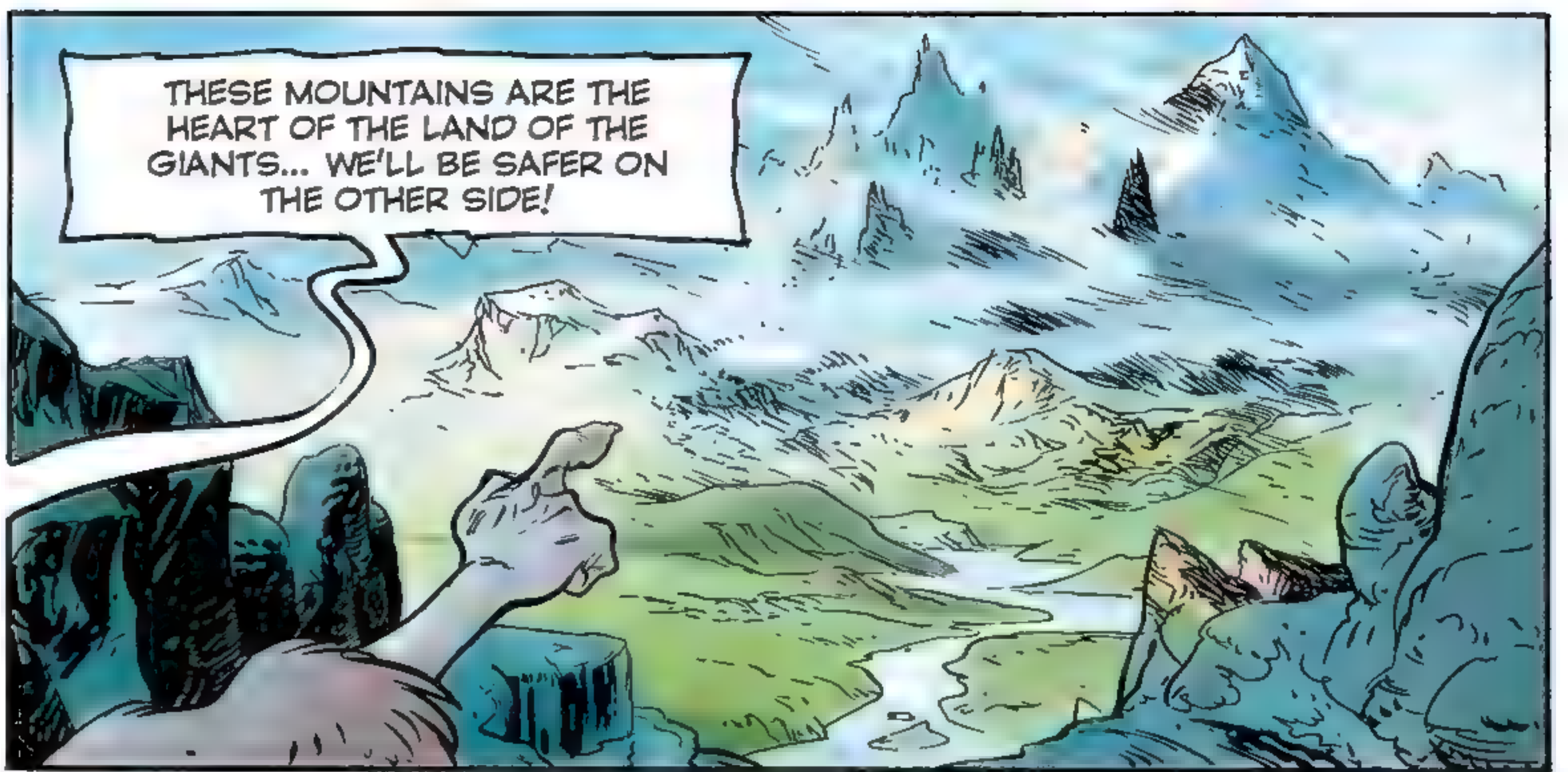
OH THERE ARE ALL KINDS... ROCKS, WATER, WIND, ICE, CLOUDS... THEY DIG INTO THE RIVERBEDS, PUSHING THE MOUNTAIN ROOTS ASIDE...

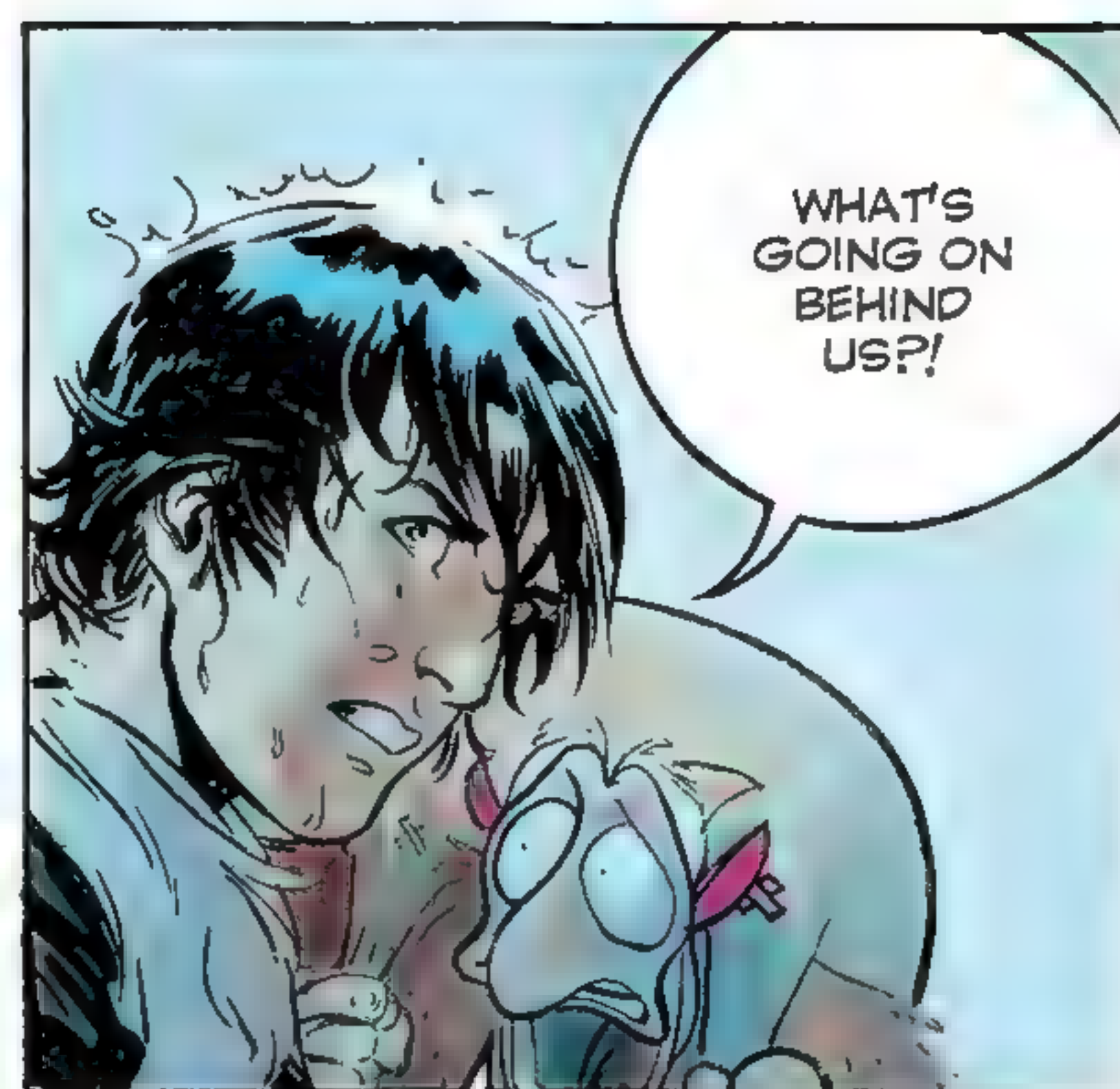
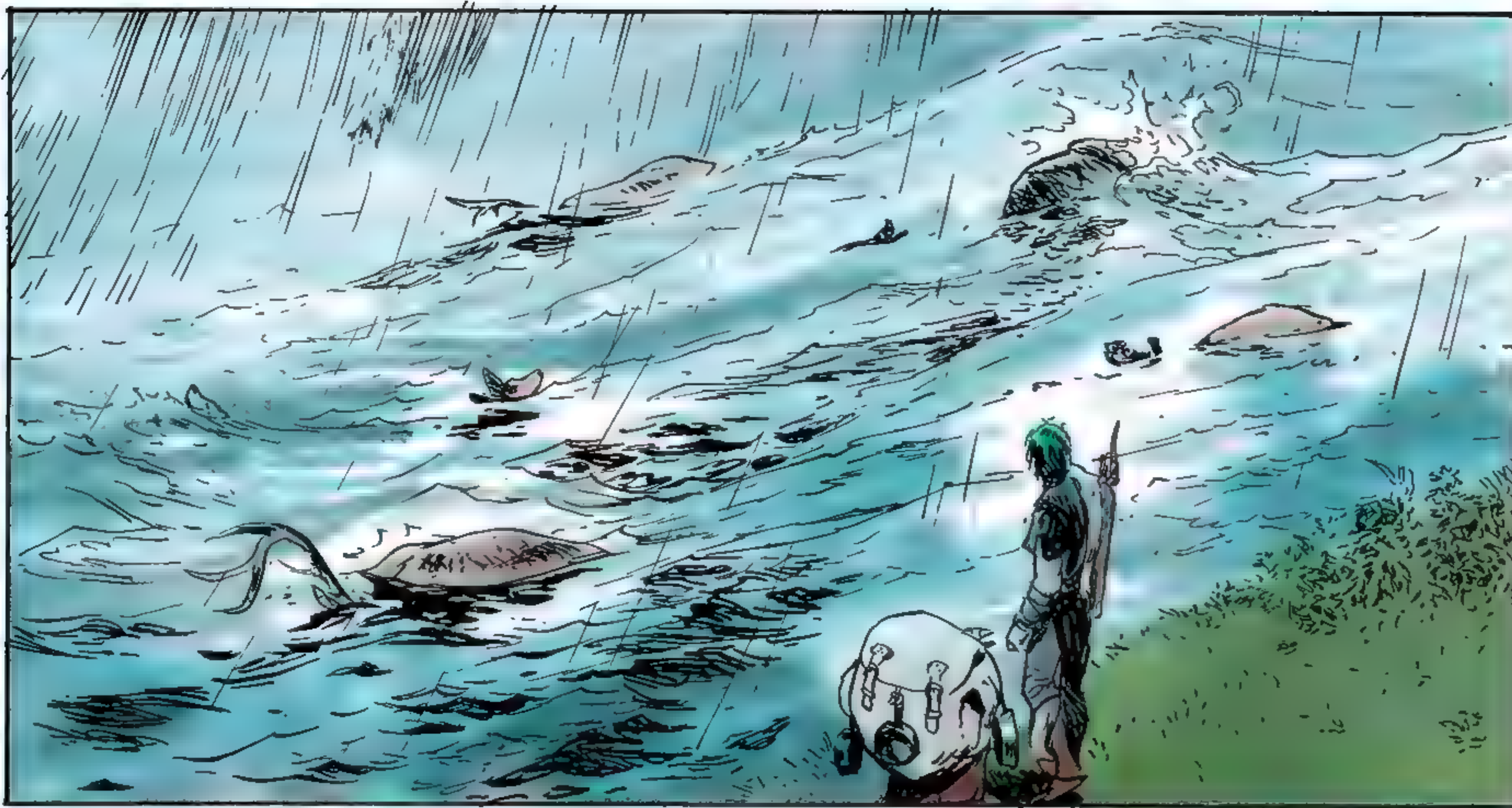
IS HE ASLEEP?

...I WOULDN'T THINK SO... THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE HERE... A SHAKING, AS THOUGH...



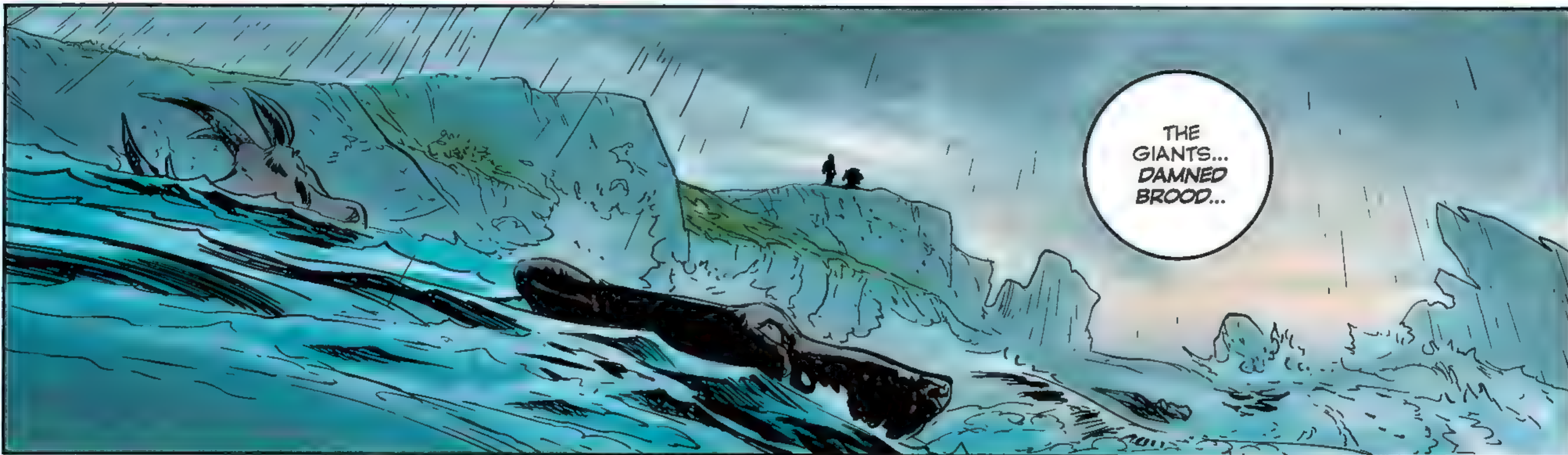
...AS THOUGH THERE WAS NOTHING HOLDING THEM UP.



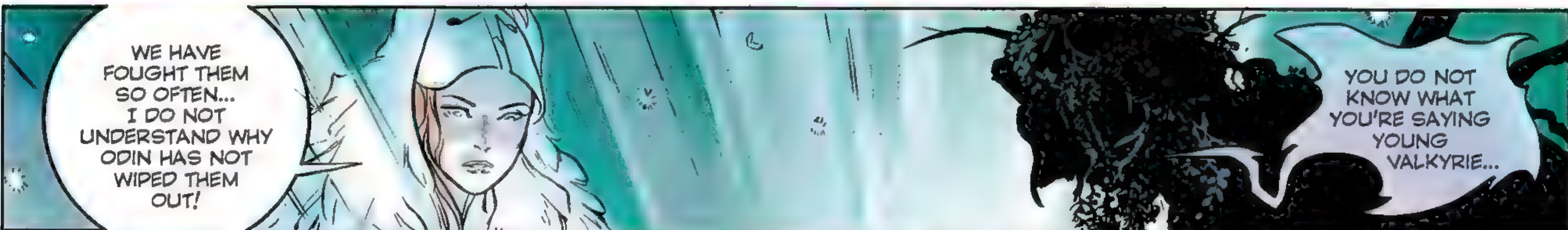


WHAT'S
GOING ON
BEHIND
US?!

THE GIANTS ARE JEALOUS OF LIFE.
THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN... THEY ARE
WAKING UP, WE BETTER HURRY!

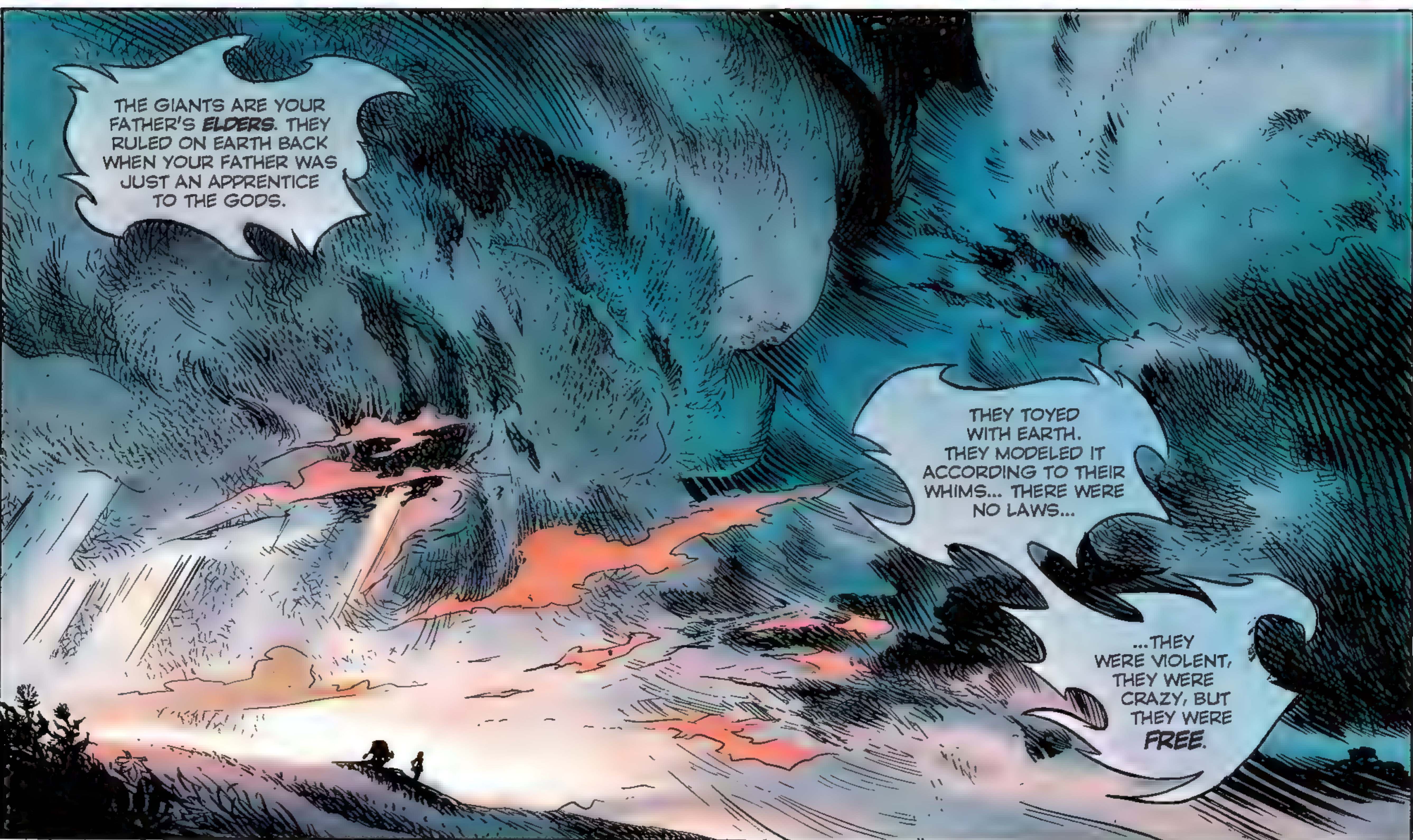


THE
GIANTS...
DAMNED
BROOD...



WE HAVE
FOUGHT THEM
SO OFTEN...
I DO NOT
UNDERSTAND WHY
ODIN HAS NOT
WIPE THEM
OUT!

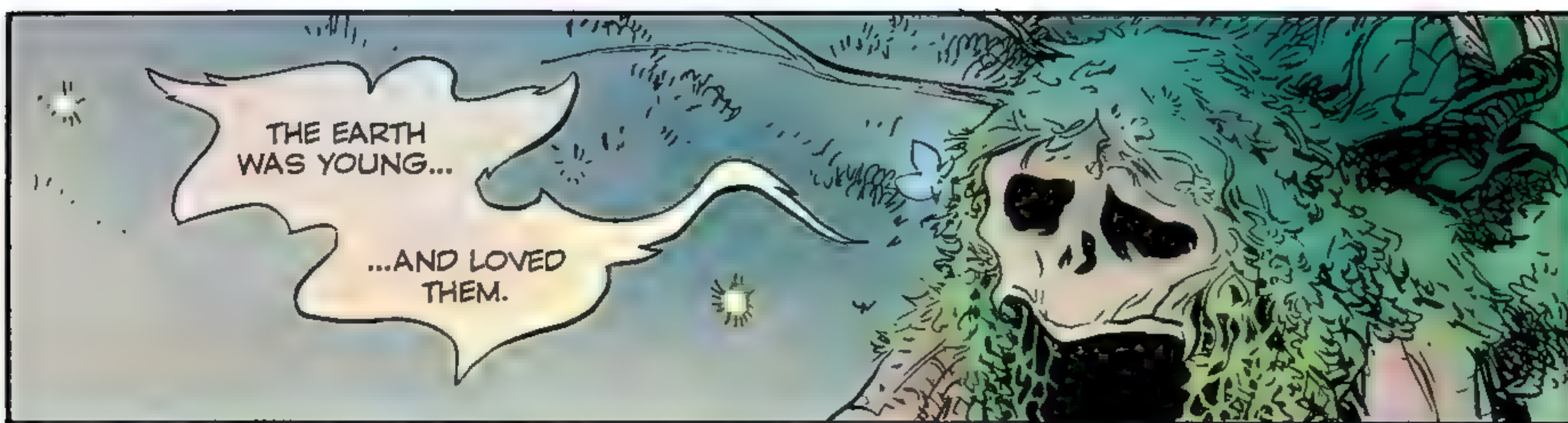
YOU DO NOT
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE SAYING
YOUNG
VALKYRIE...



THE GIANTS ARE YOUR
FATHER'S **ELDERS**. THEY
RULED ON EARTH BACK
WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS
JUST AN APPRENTICE
TO THE GODS.

THEY TOYED
WITH EARTH.
THEY MODELED IT
ACCORDING TO THEIR
WHIMS... THERE WERE
NO LAWS...

...THEY
WERE VIOLENT,
THEY WERE
CRAZY, BUT
THEY WERE
FREE.

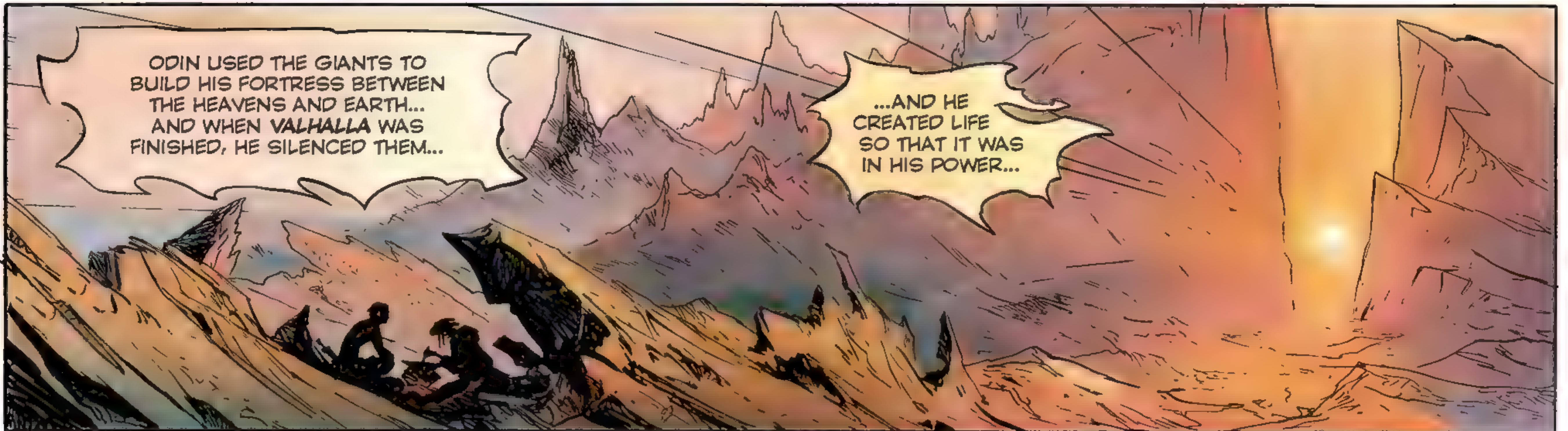


THE EARTH
WAS YOUNG...

...AND LOVED
THEM.

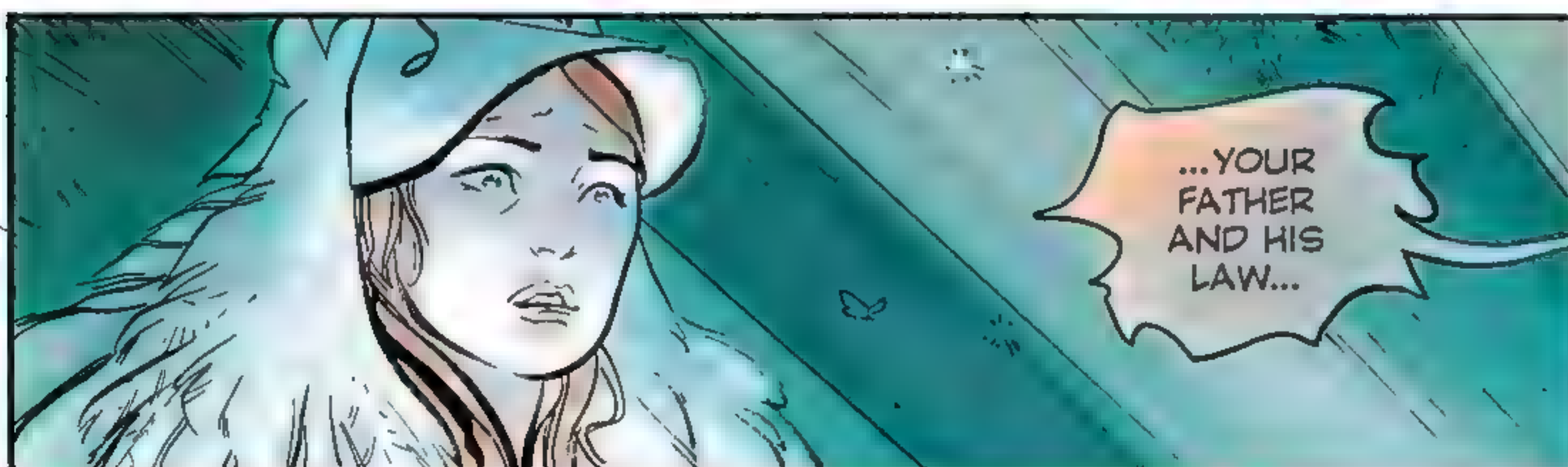


AND THEN
THE LAWS
CAME INTO
BEING.

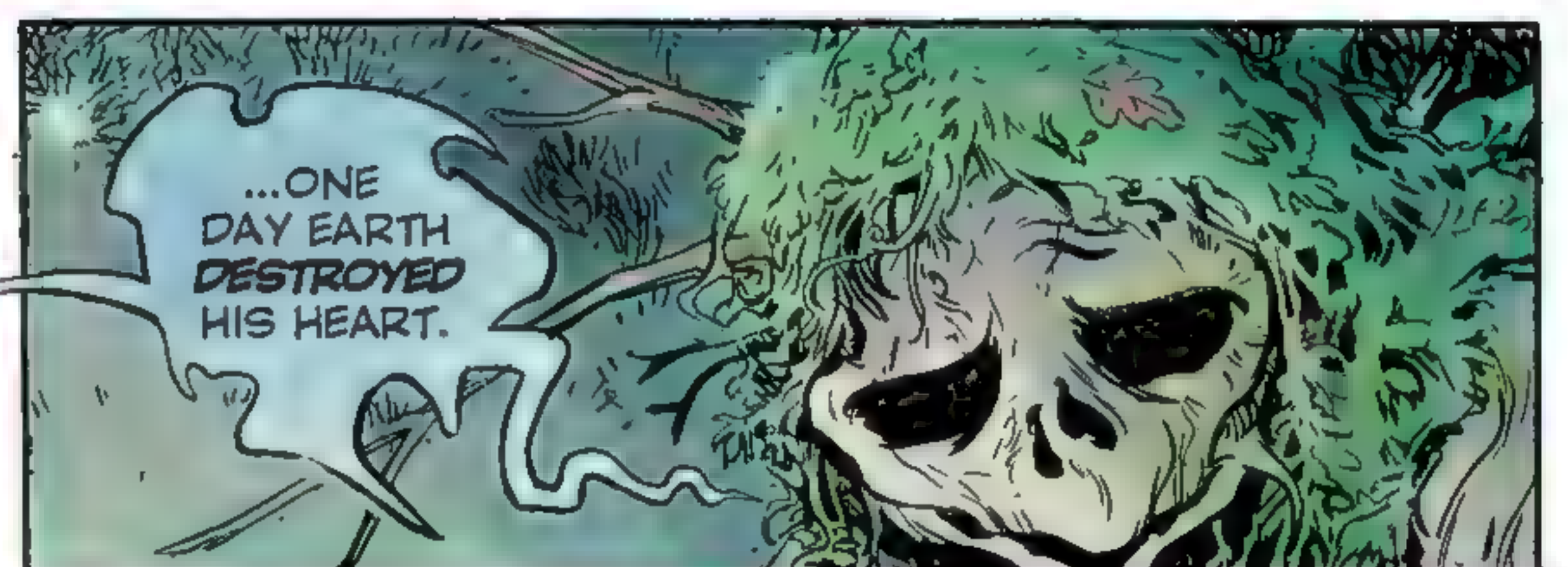


ODIN USED THE GIANTS TO
BUILD HIS FORTRESS BETWEEN
THE HEAVENS AND EARTH...
AND WHEN VALHALLA WAS
FINISHED, HE SILENCED THEM...

...AND HE
CREATED LIFE
SO THAT IT WAS
IN HIS POWER...



...YOUR
FATHER
AND HIS
LAW...



...ONE
DAY EARTH
DESTROYED
HIS HEART.



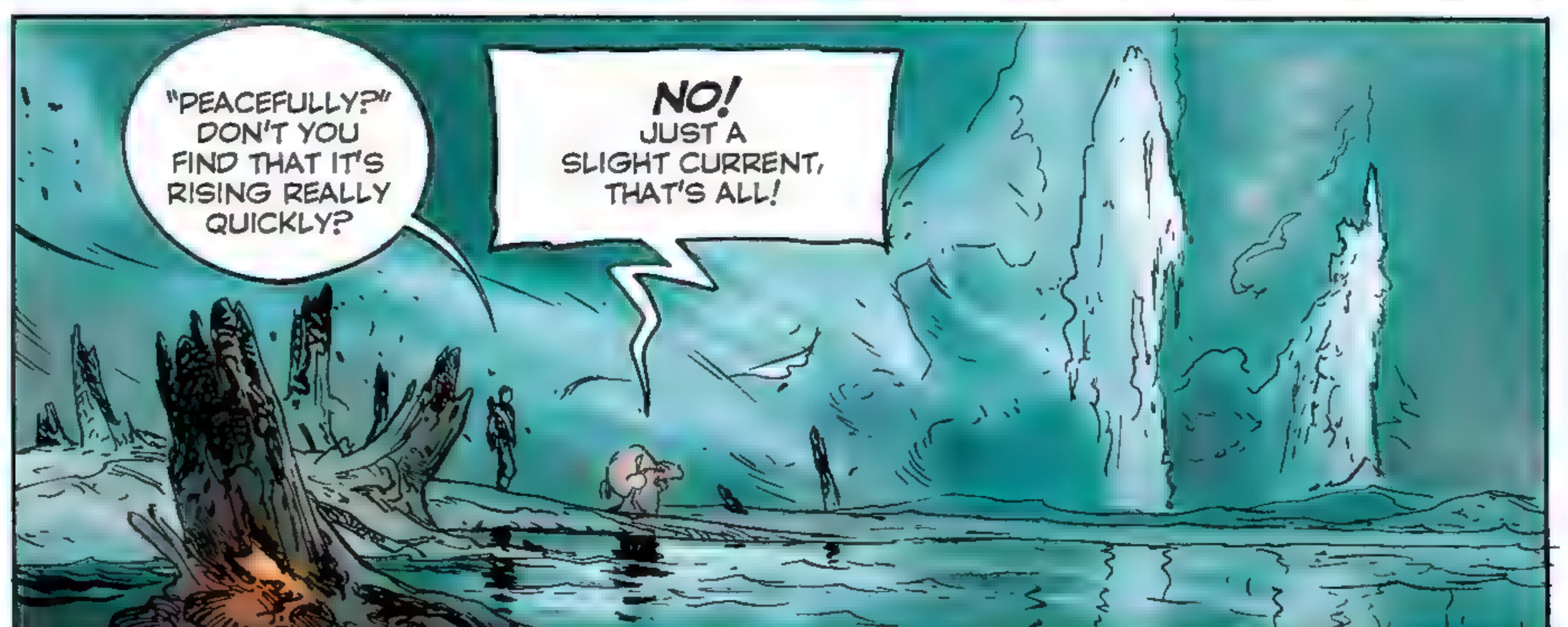
THE GIANTS HAVE BEEN
SLEEPING FOR A LONG
TIME... BUT NOW THAT
THE GOD OF GODS
HAS RETIRED FROM
THE WORLD...

...THE TIME
FOR THEM
TO AWAKEN
HAS COME!

ARE YOU SURE
THERE IS A PATH
THROUGH THOSE
MOUNTAINS?

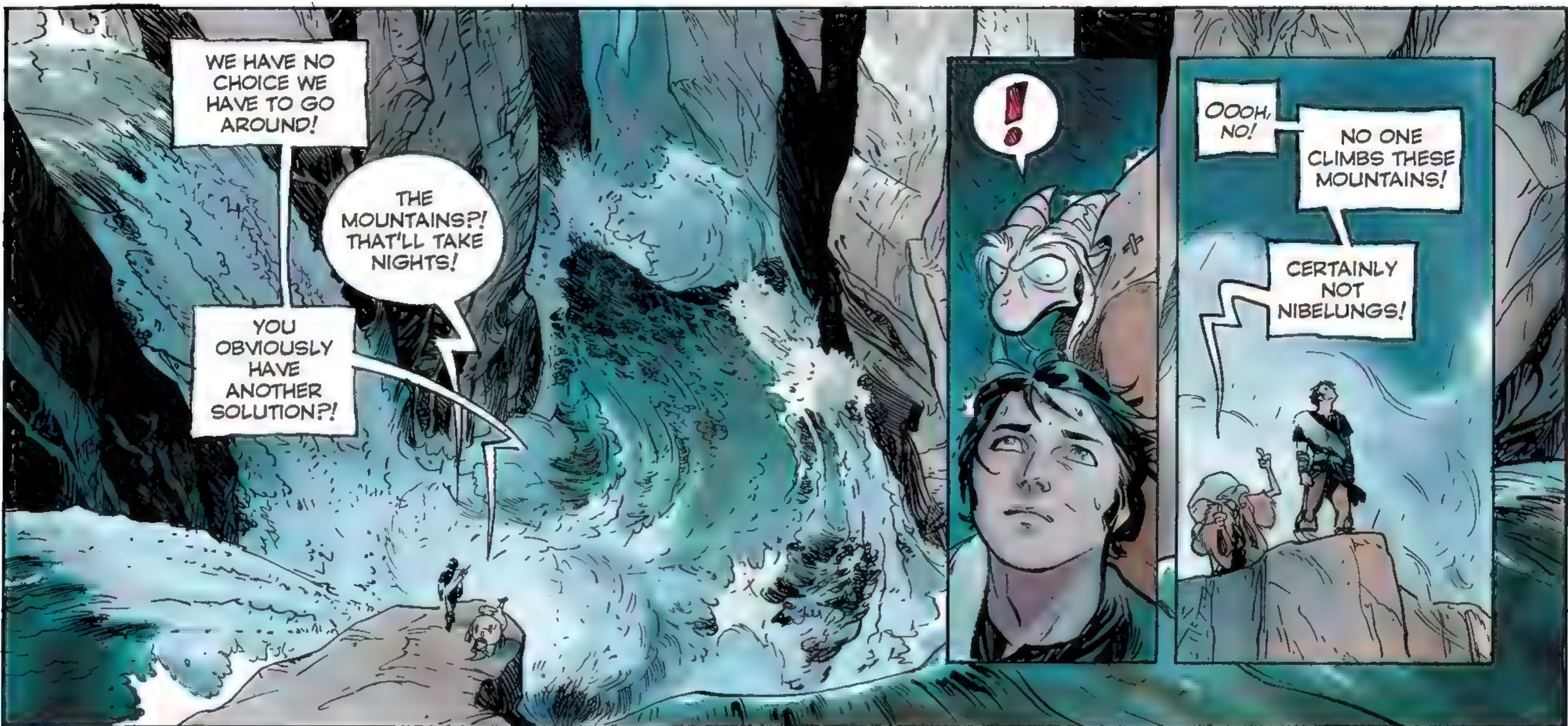
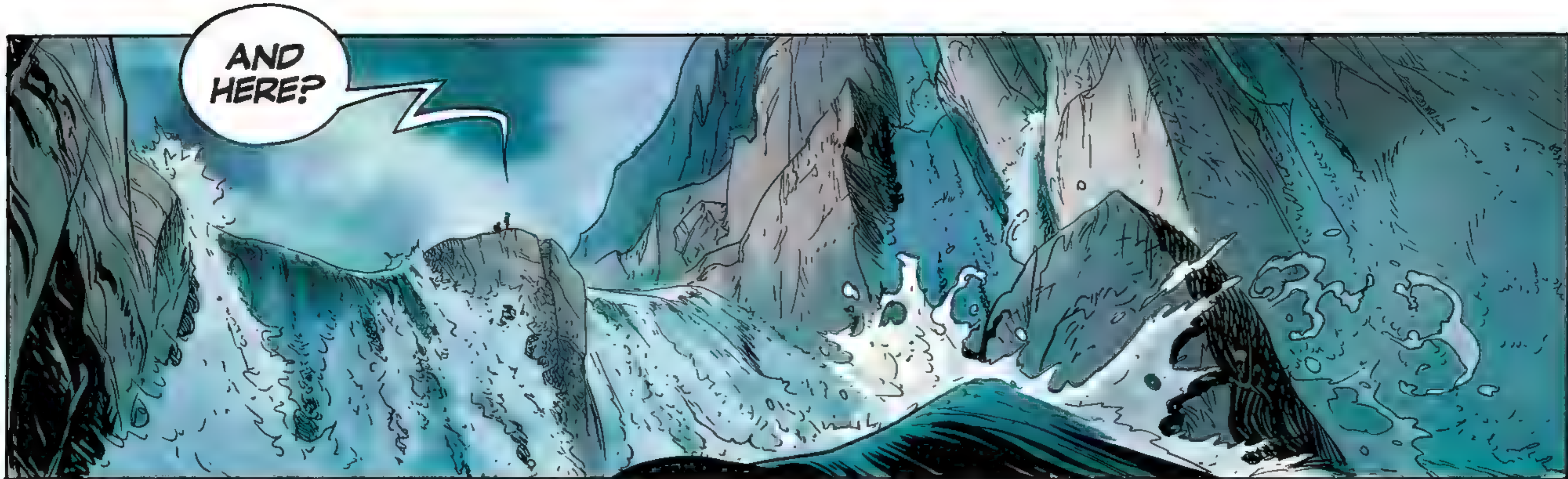


CERTAIN! THE RIVER CONTINUES
PEACEFULLY ON ITS COURSE...
WE JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW IT!



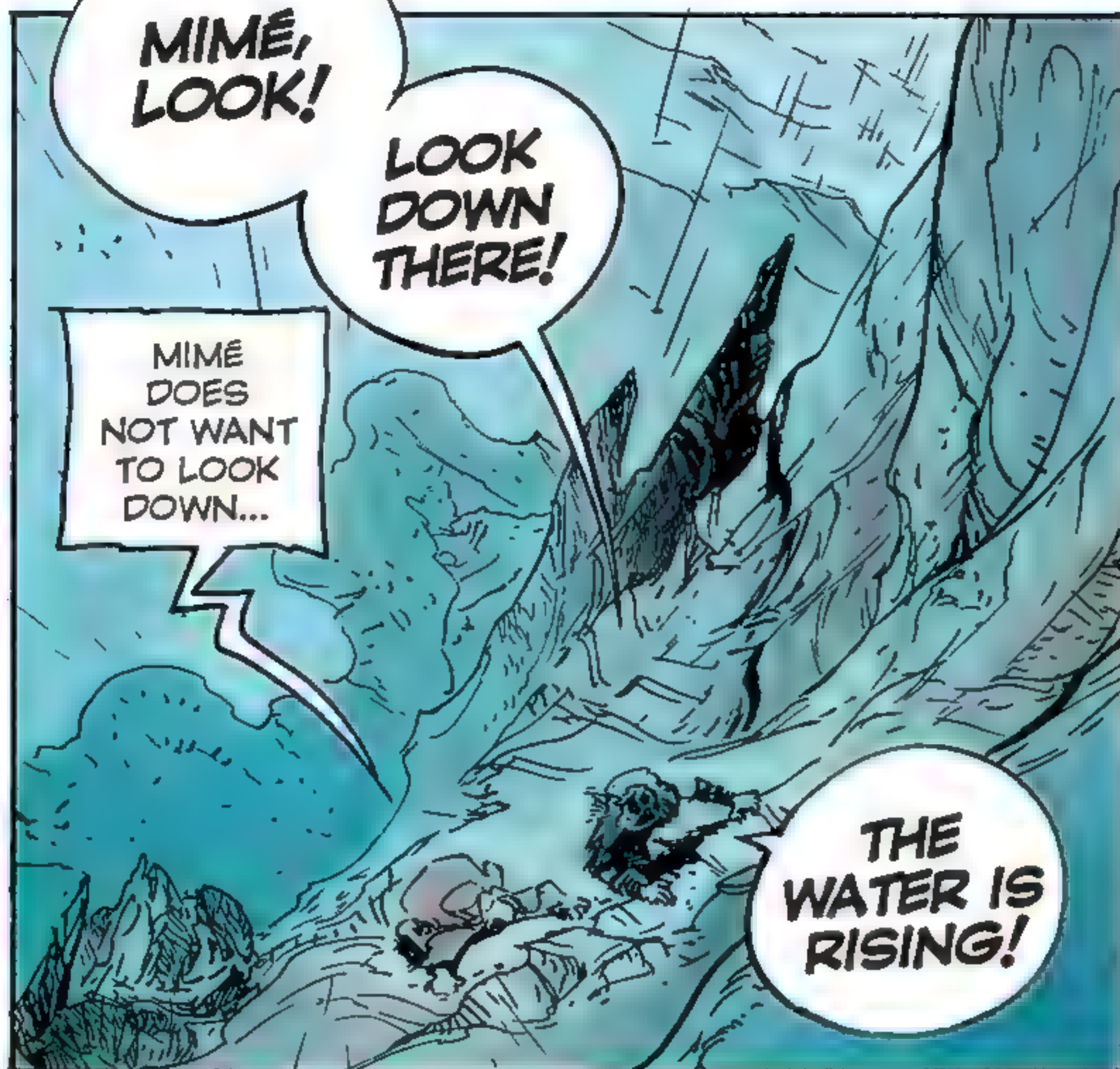
"PEACEFULLY?"
DON'T YOU
FIND THAT IT'S
RISING REALLY
QUICKLY?

NO!
JUST A
SLIGHT CURRENT,
THAT'S ALL!





THAT
NOISE...

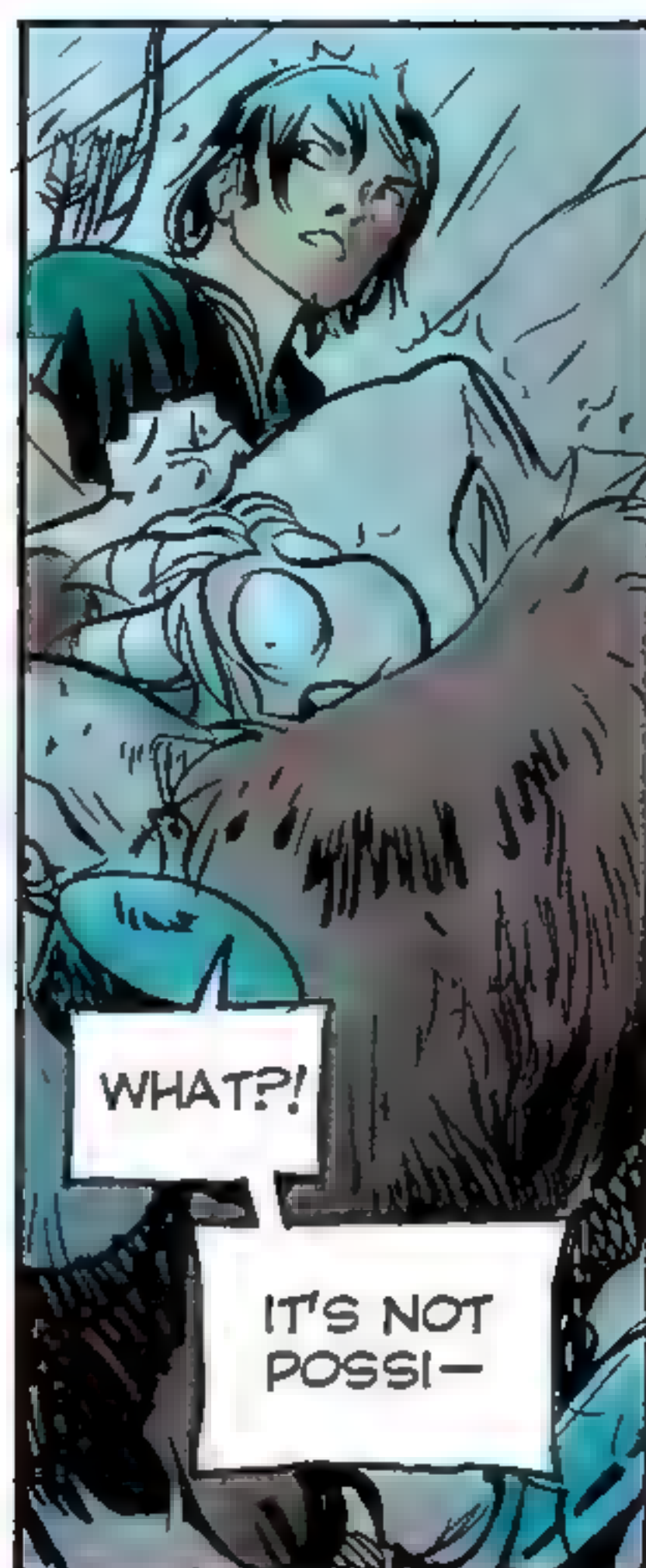


MIMÉ,
LOOK!

LOOK
DOWN
THERE!

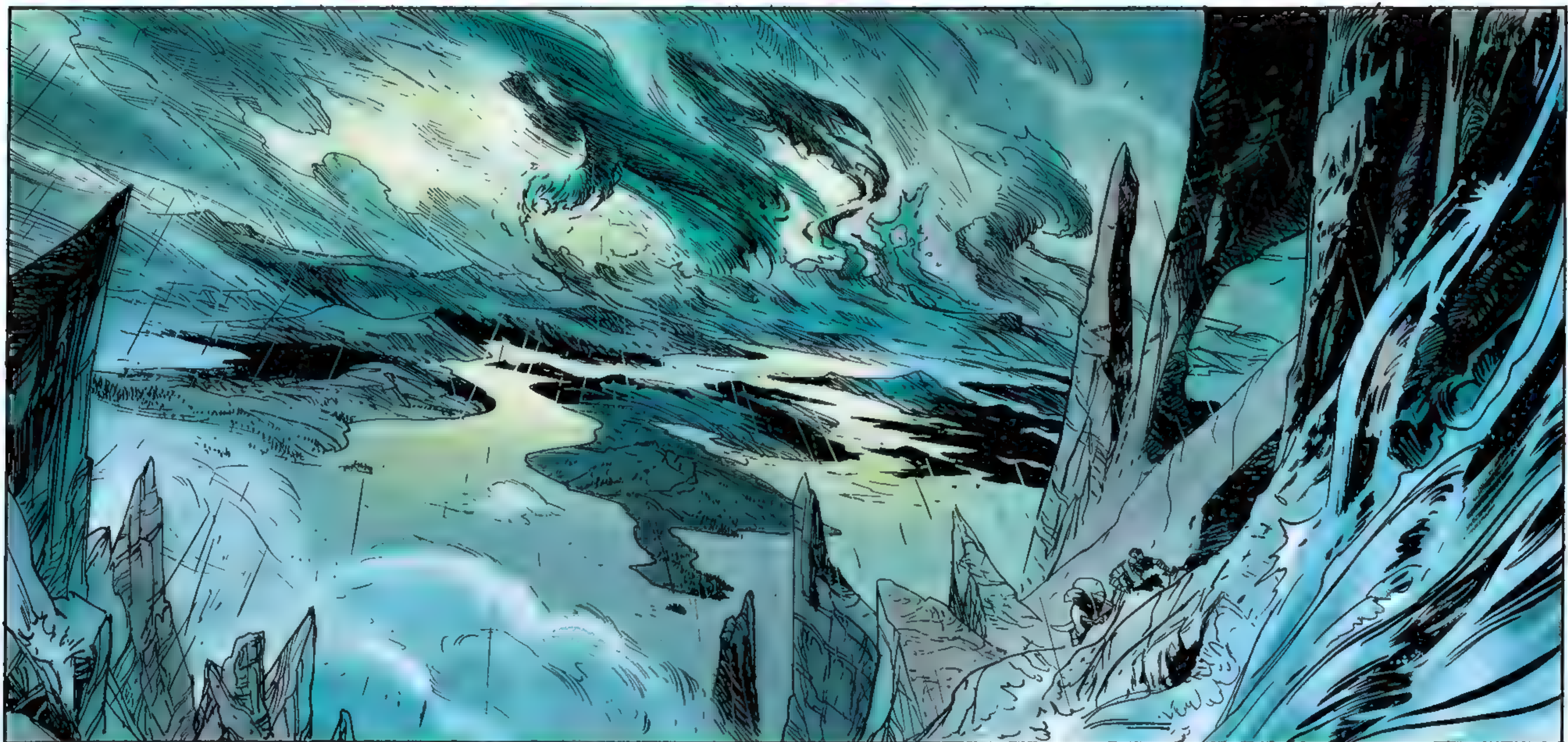
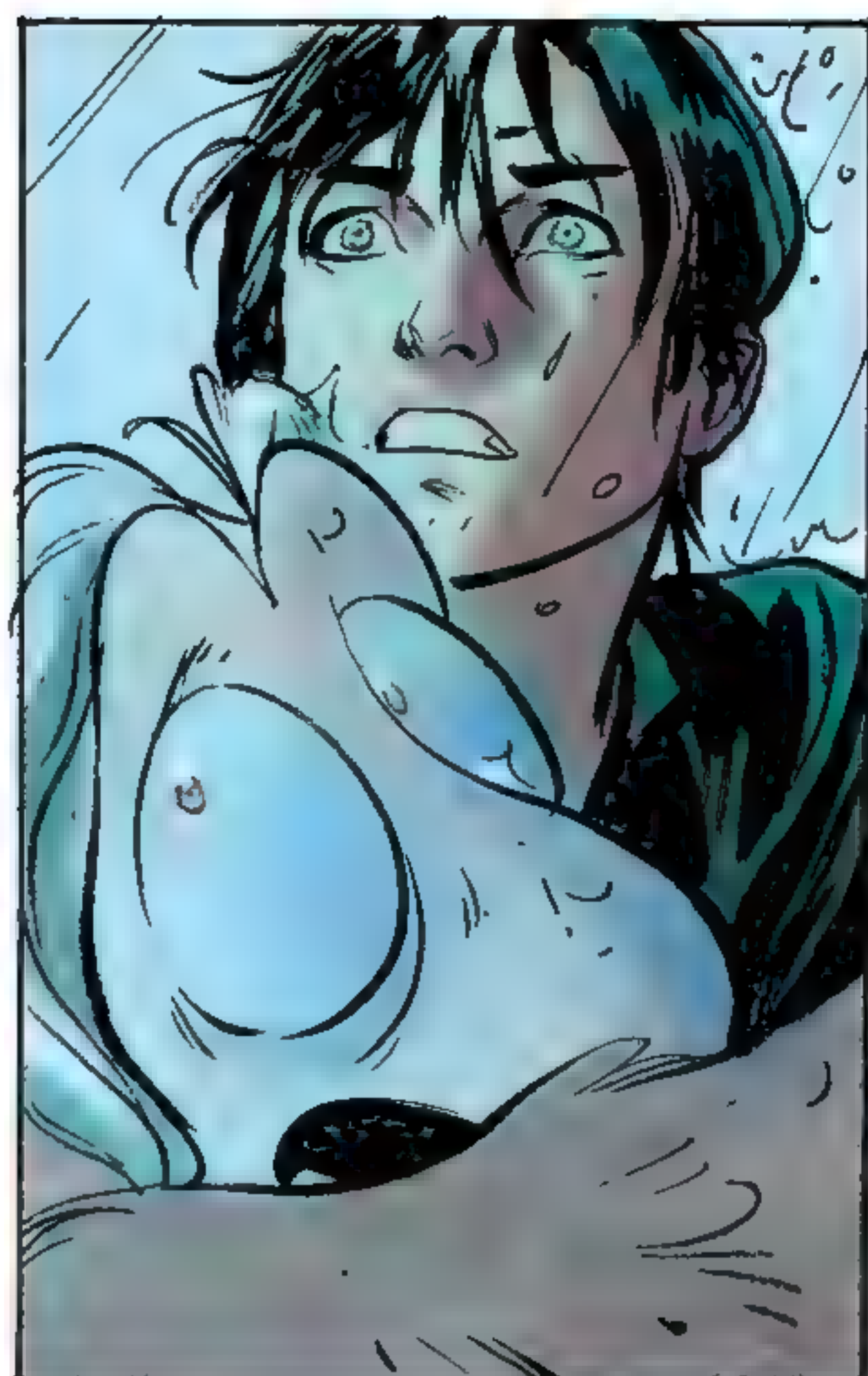
MIMÉ
DOES
NOT WANT
TO LOOK
DOWN...

THE
WATER IS
RISING!



WHAT?!

IT'S NOT
POSSI-



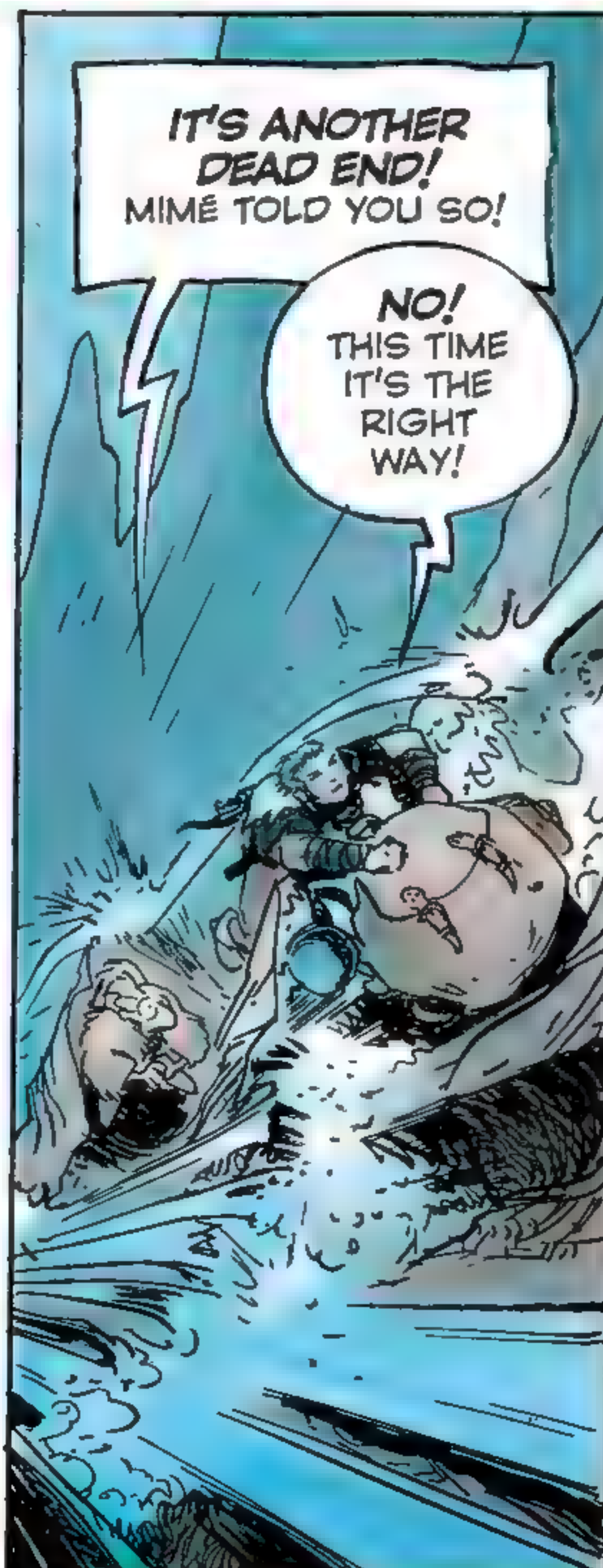
IF THE WATER
ATTACKS THE
MOUNTAIN...
IF THE MOUNTAIN
WAKES UP...

...OOOOOOH...
MIMÉ TOLD YOU
WE SHOULDN'T
CLIMB!

IT'S TOO
LATE TO GO
BACK!



YOU
AND YOUR
ANVIL!



IT'S ANOTHER
DEAD END!
MIMÉ TOLD YOU SO!

NO!
THIS TIME
IT'S THE
RIGHT
WAY!

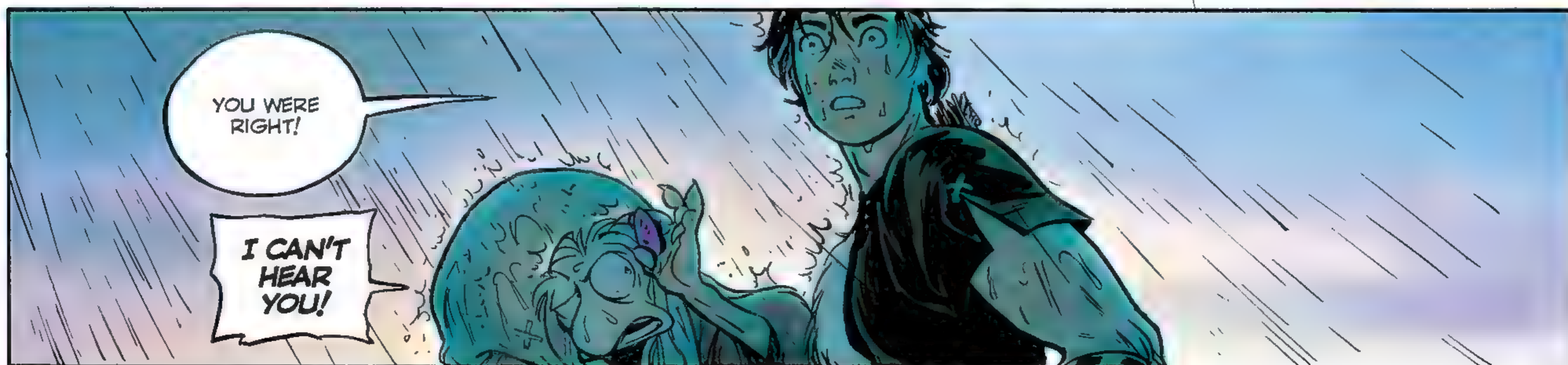


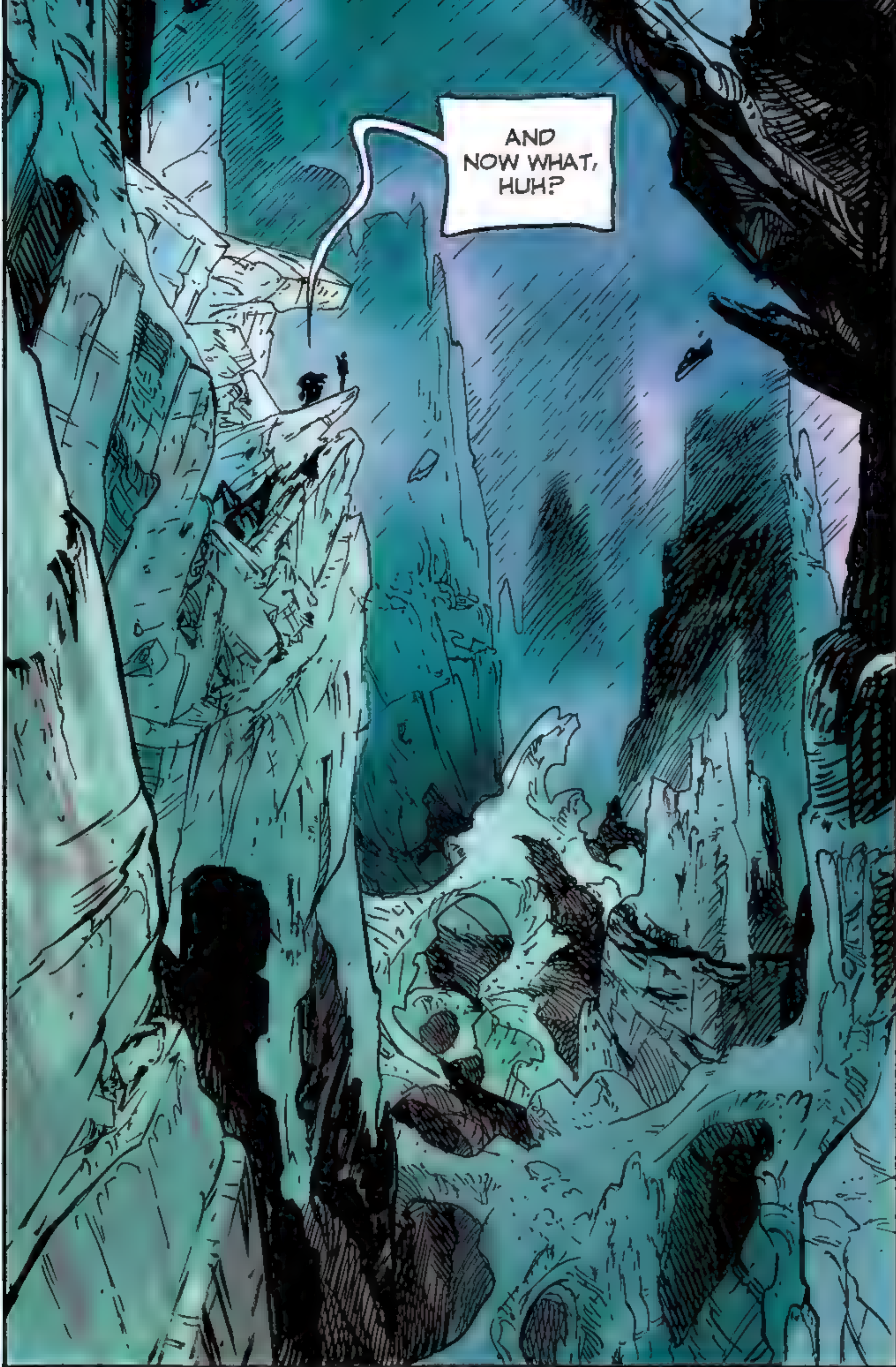
ONE
LAST
EFFORT!

I THINK
WE'RE CLOSE
TO THE
SUMMIT...



1



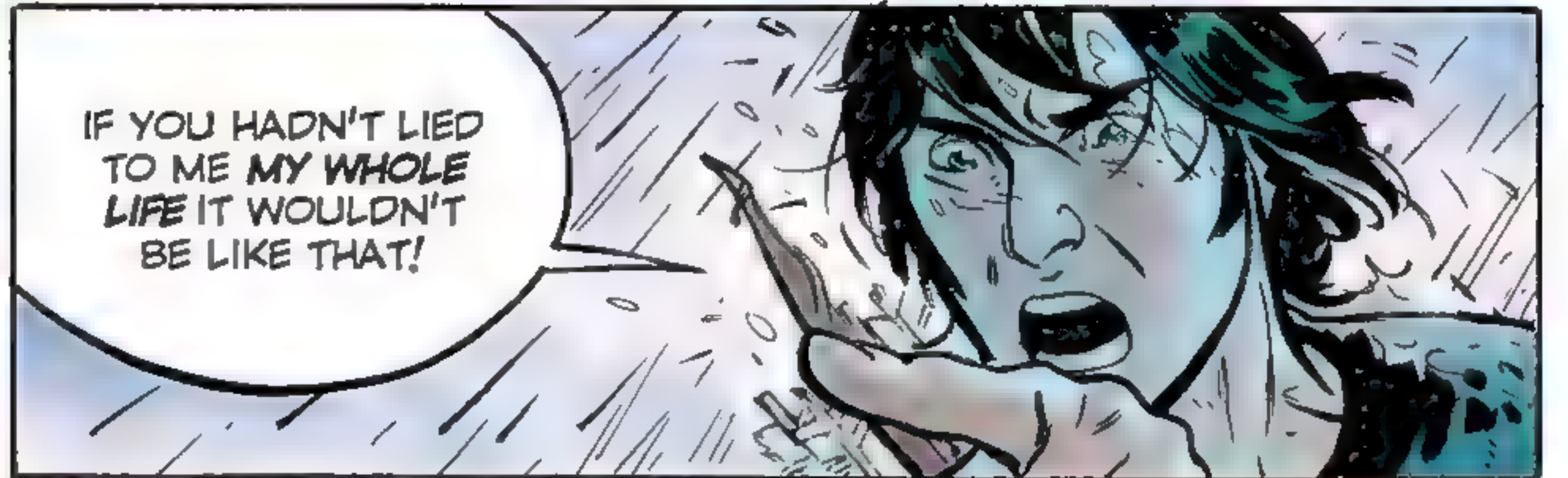


AND NOW WHAT, HUH?

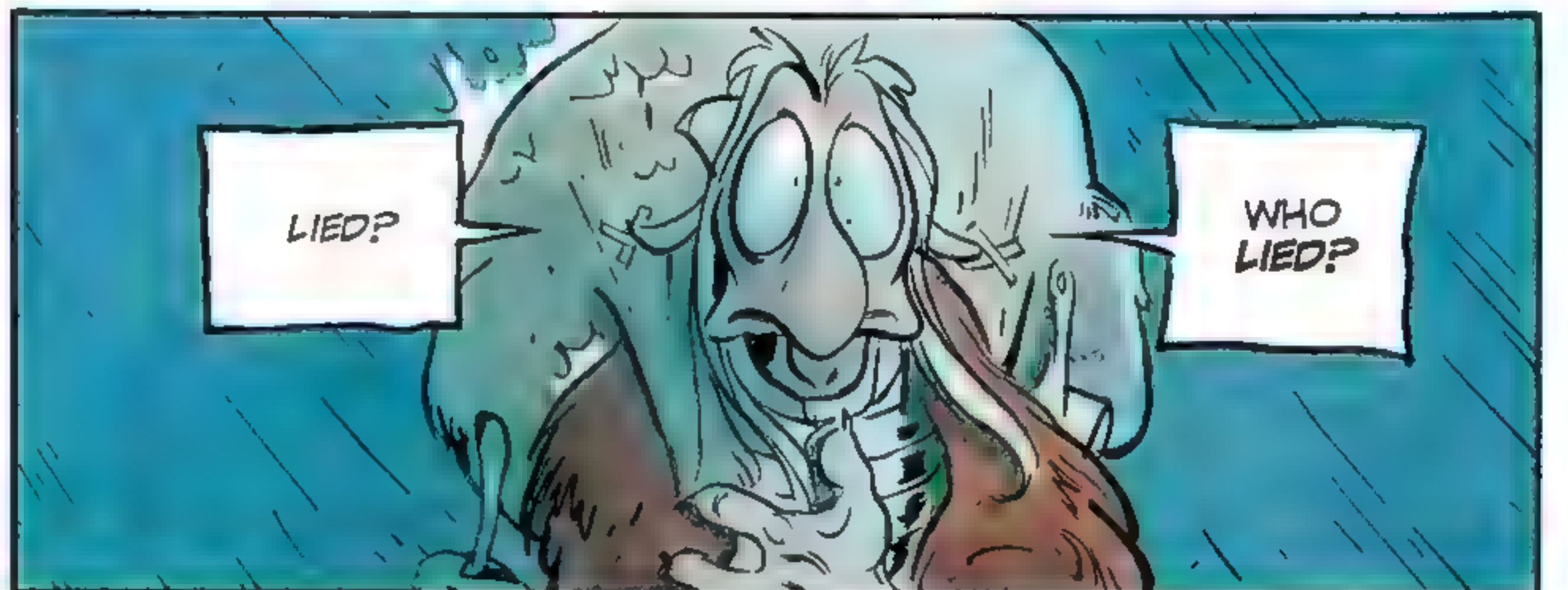


YOU JUST CAN'T HELP YOURSELF! IF MIMÉ SAYS GO LEFT, YOU HAVE TO TURN TO THE RIGHT!

EH?

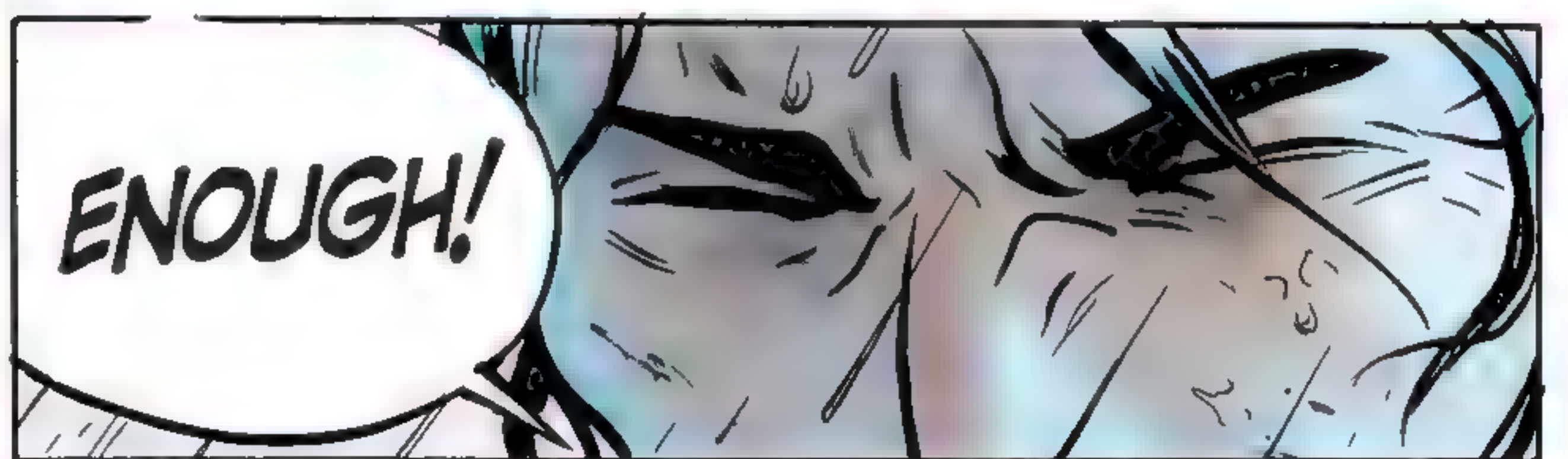


IF YOU HADN'T LIED TO ME MY WHOLE LIFE IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE THAT!

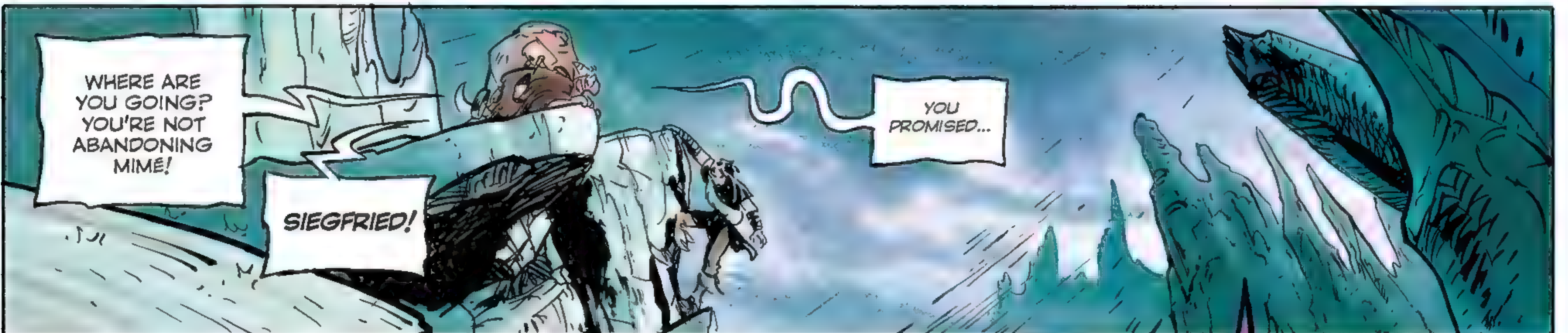


LIED?

WHO LIED?



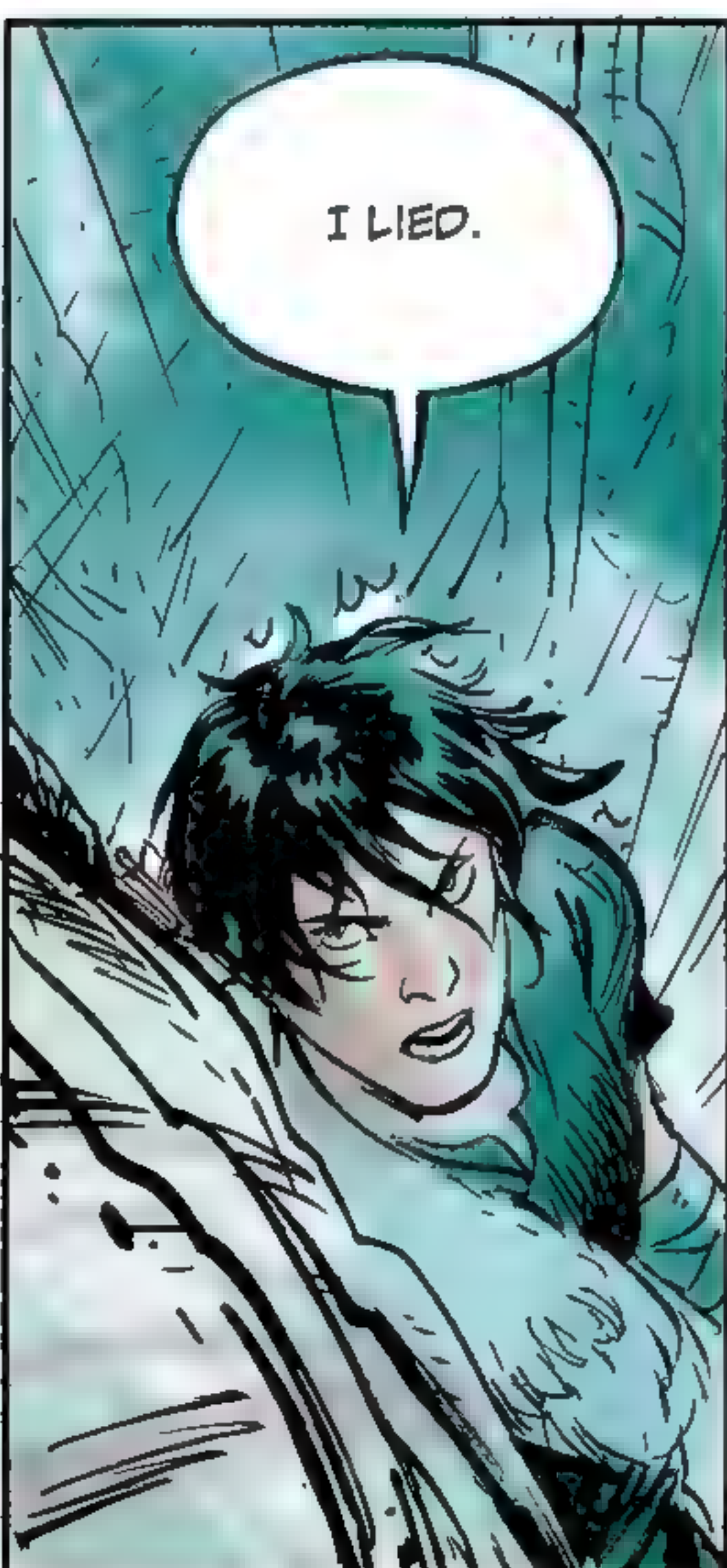
ENOUGH!



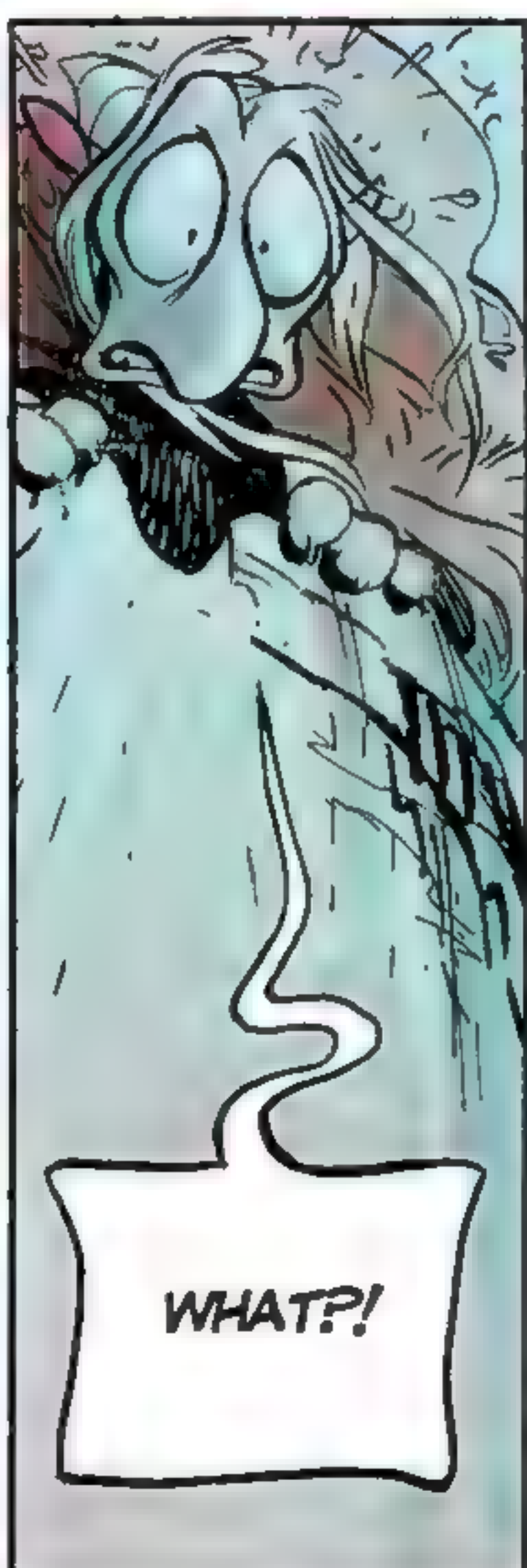
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? YOU'RE NOT ABANDONING MIMÉ!

SIEGFRIED!

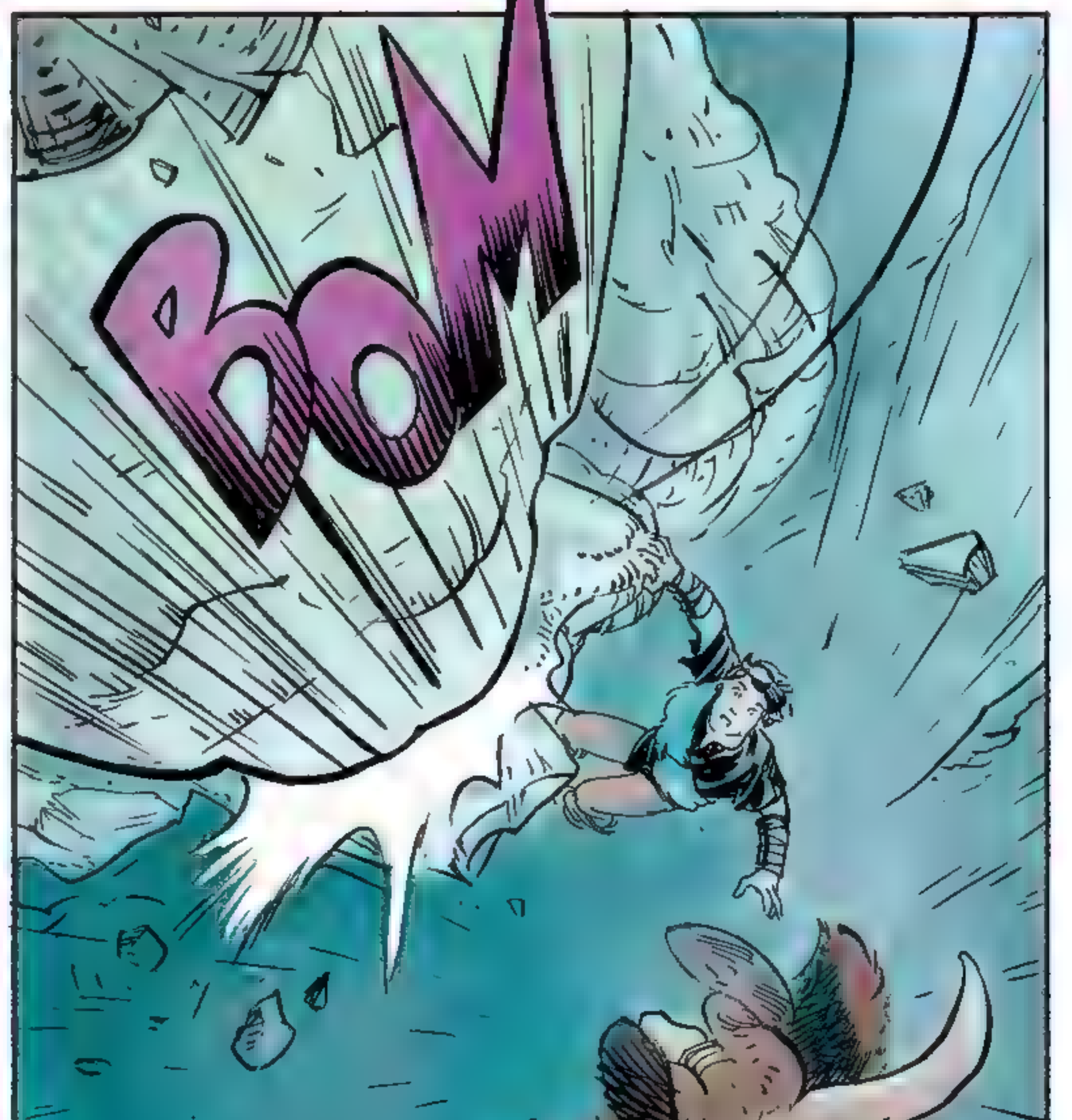
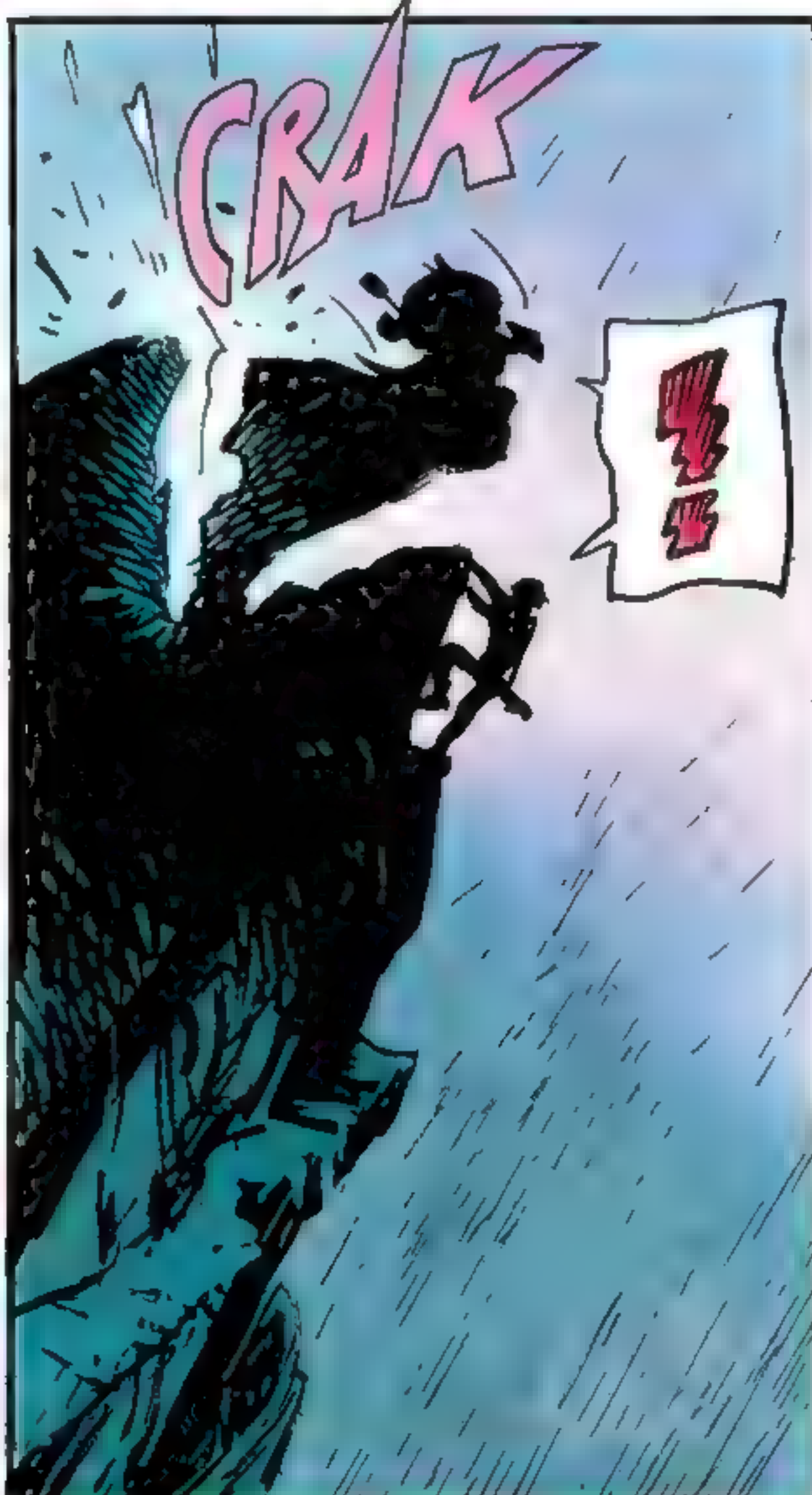
YOU PROMISED...

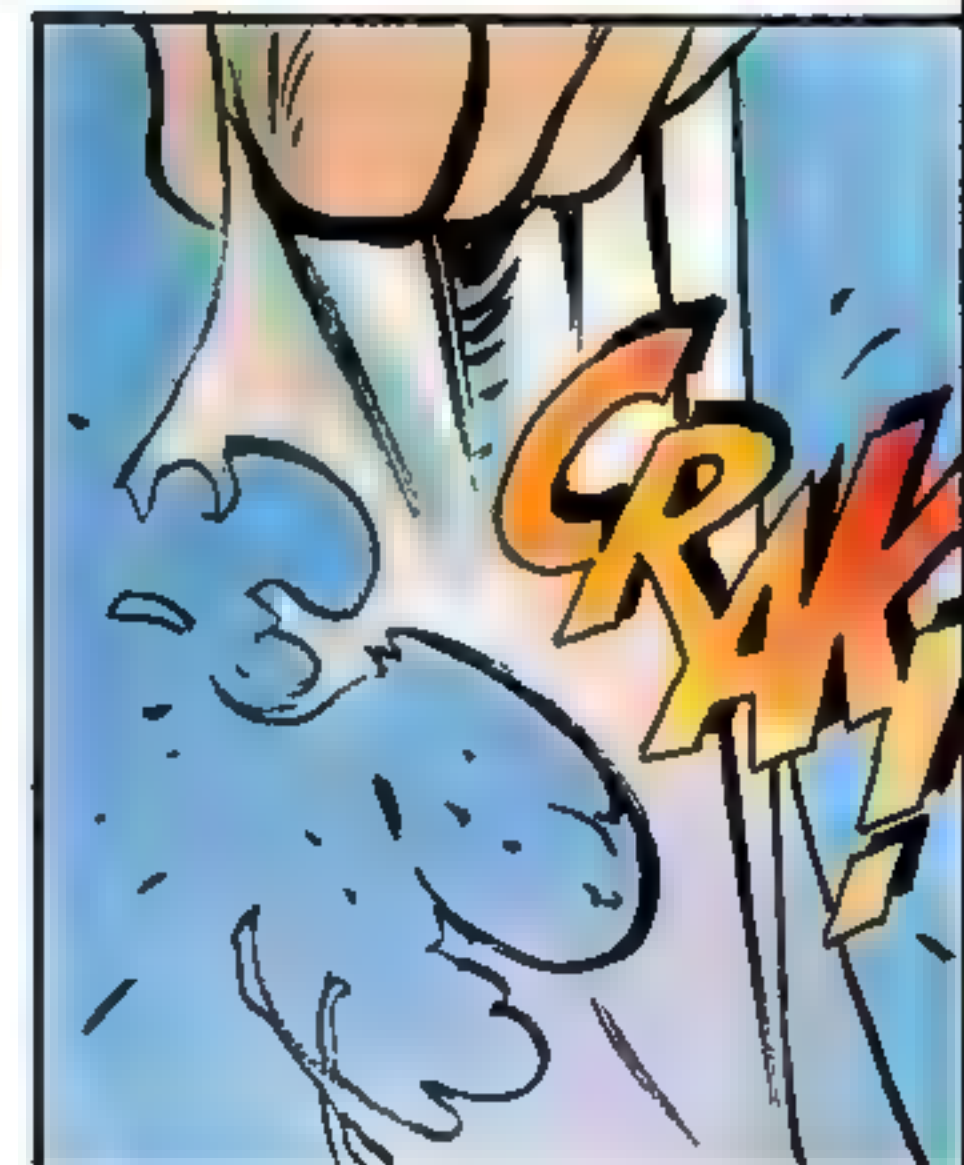
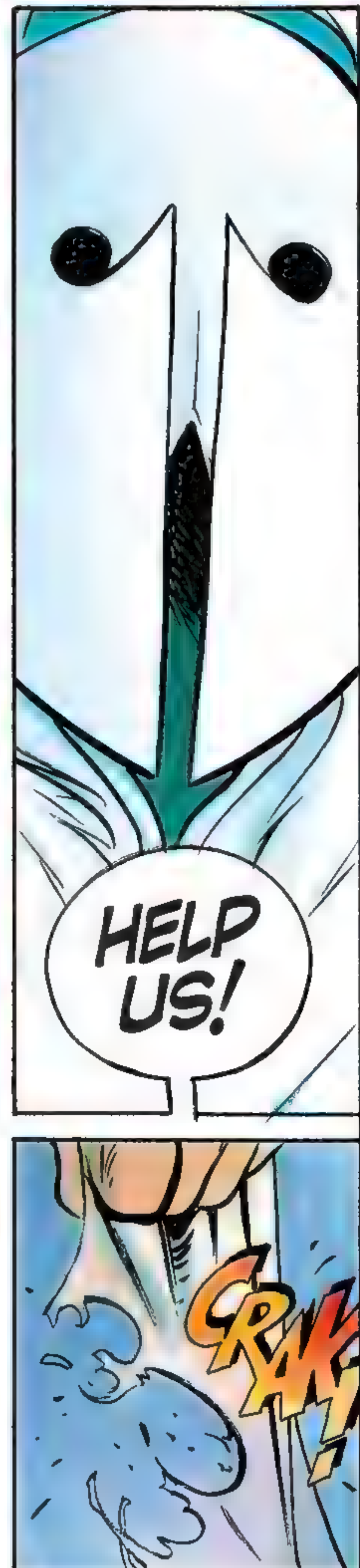
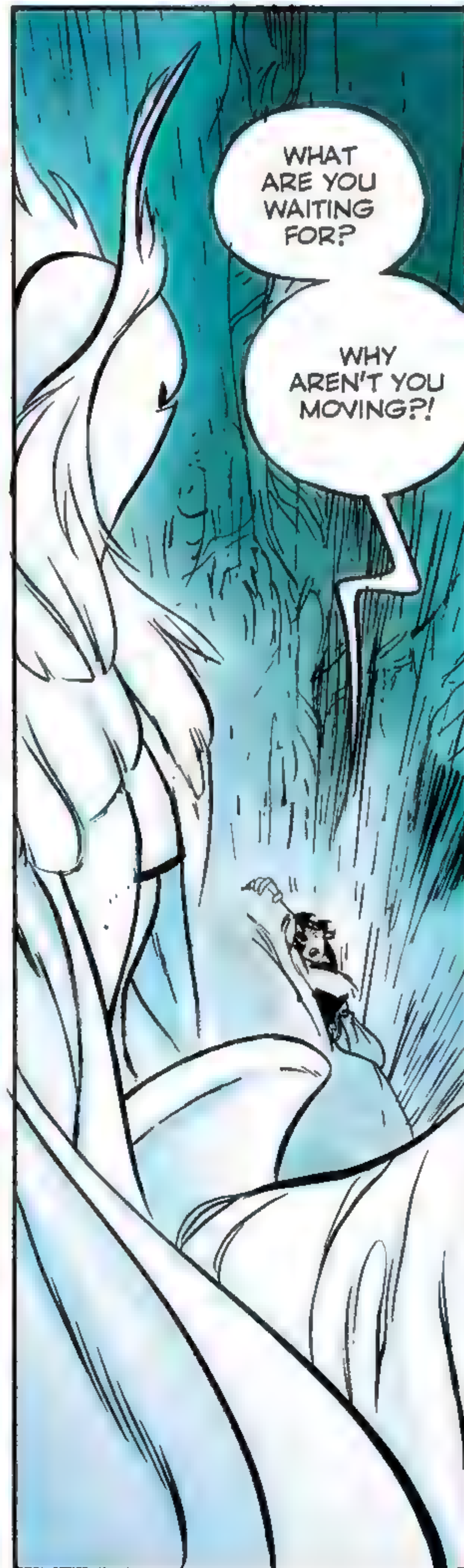
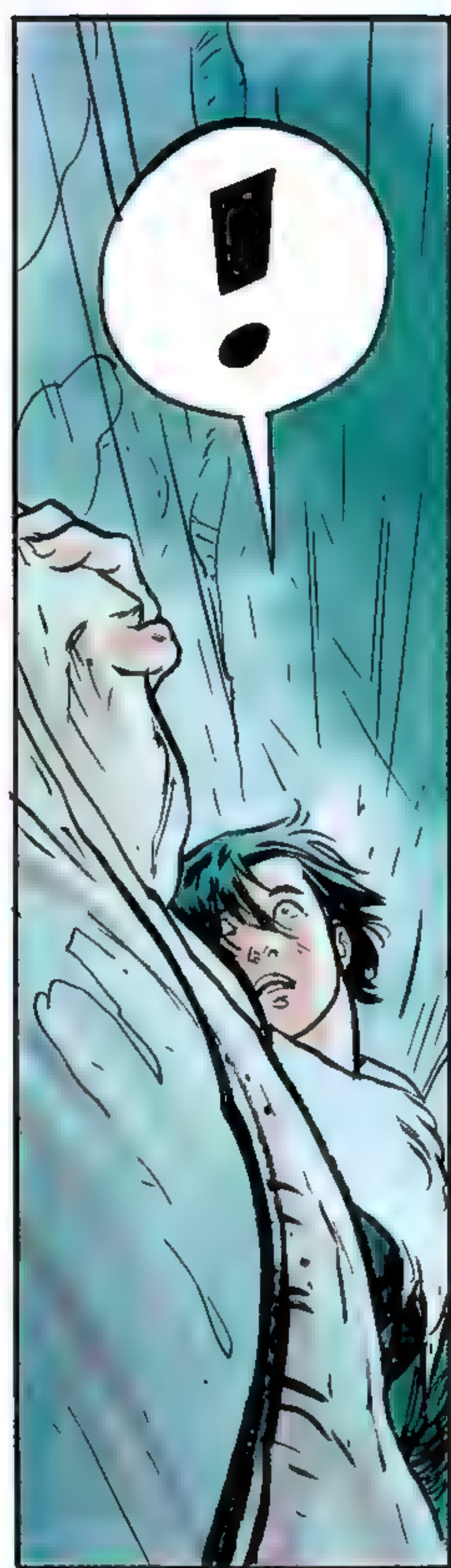
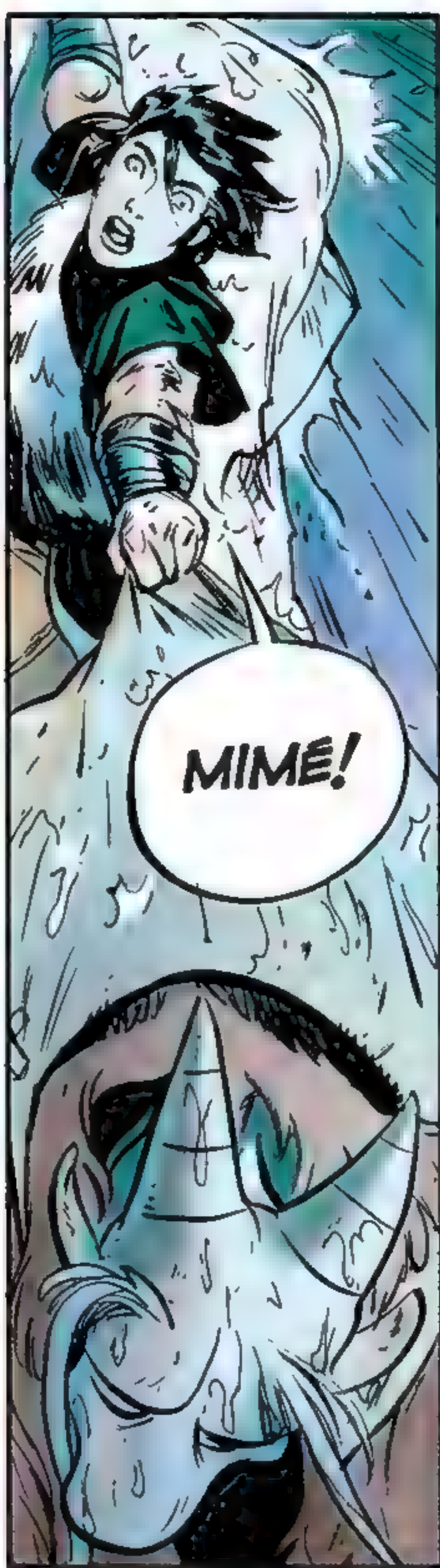


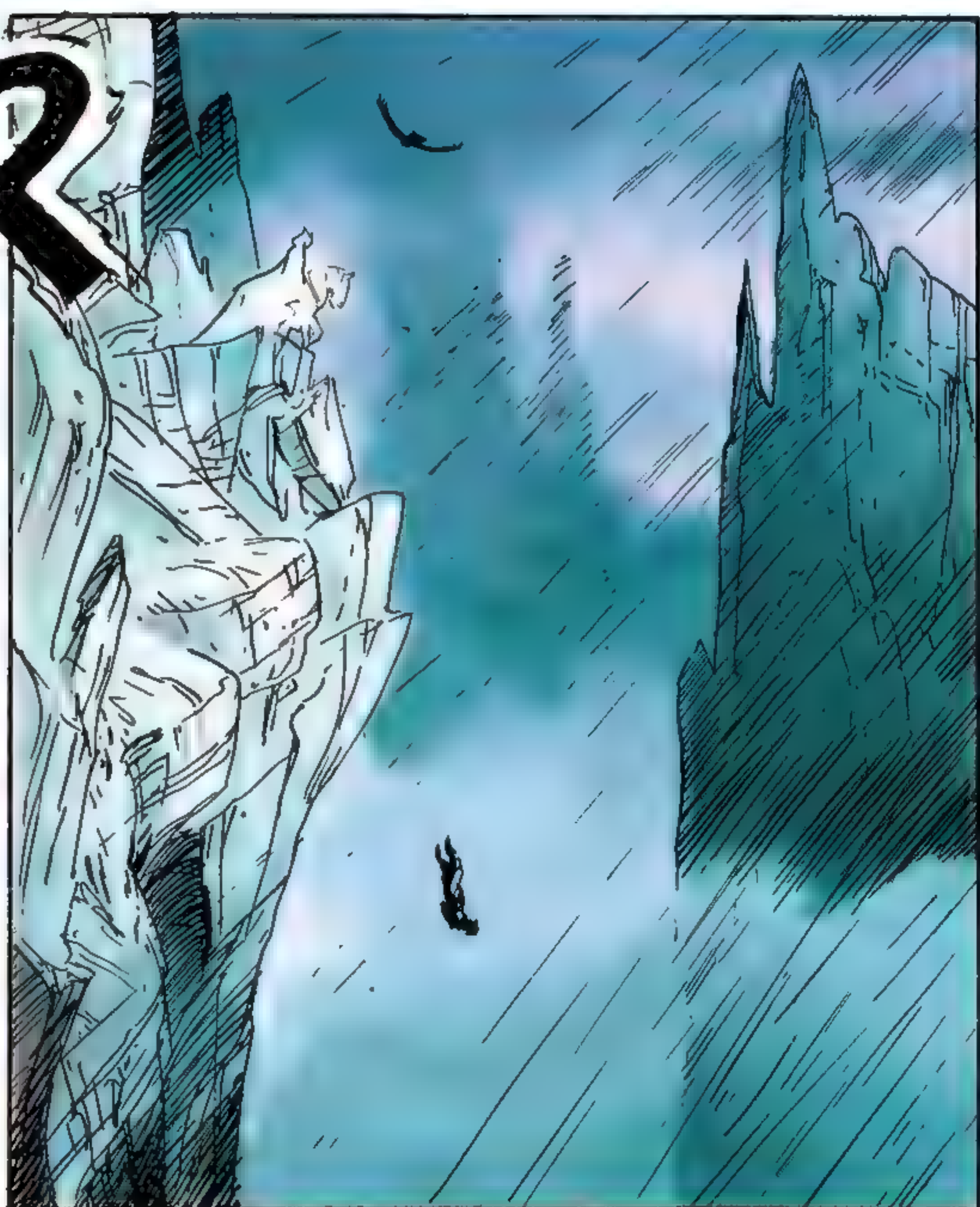
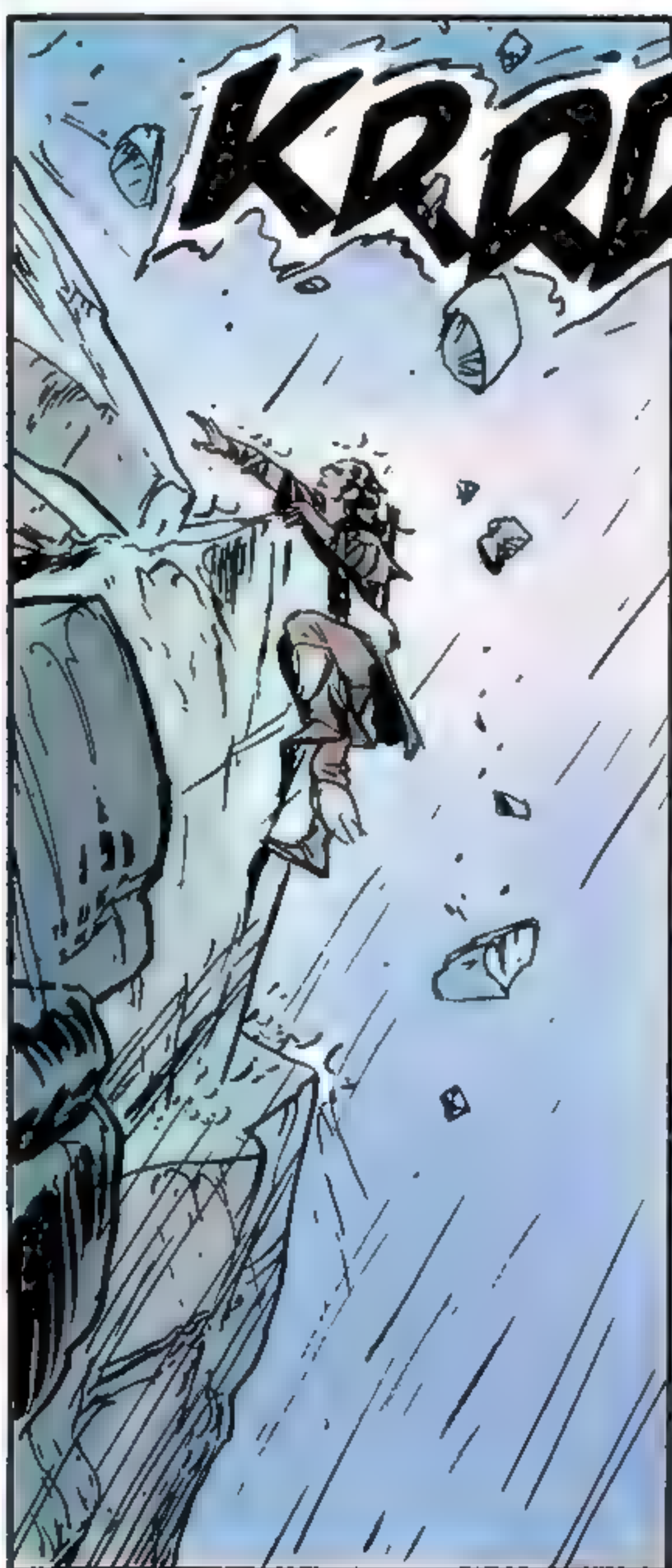
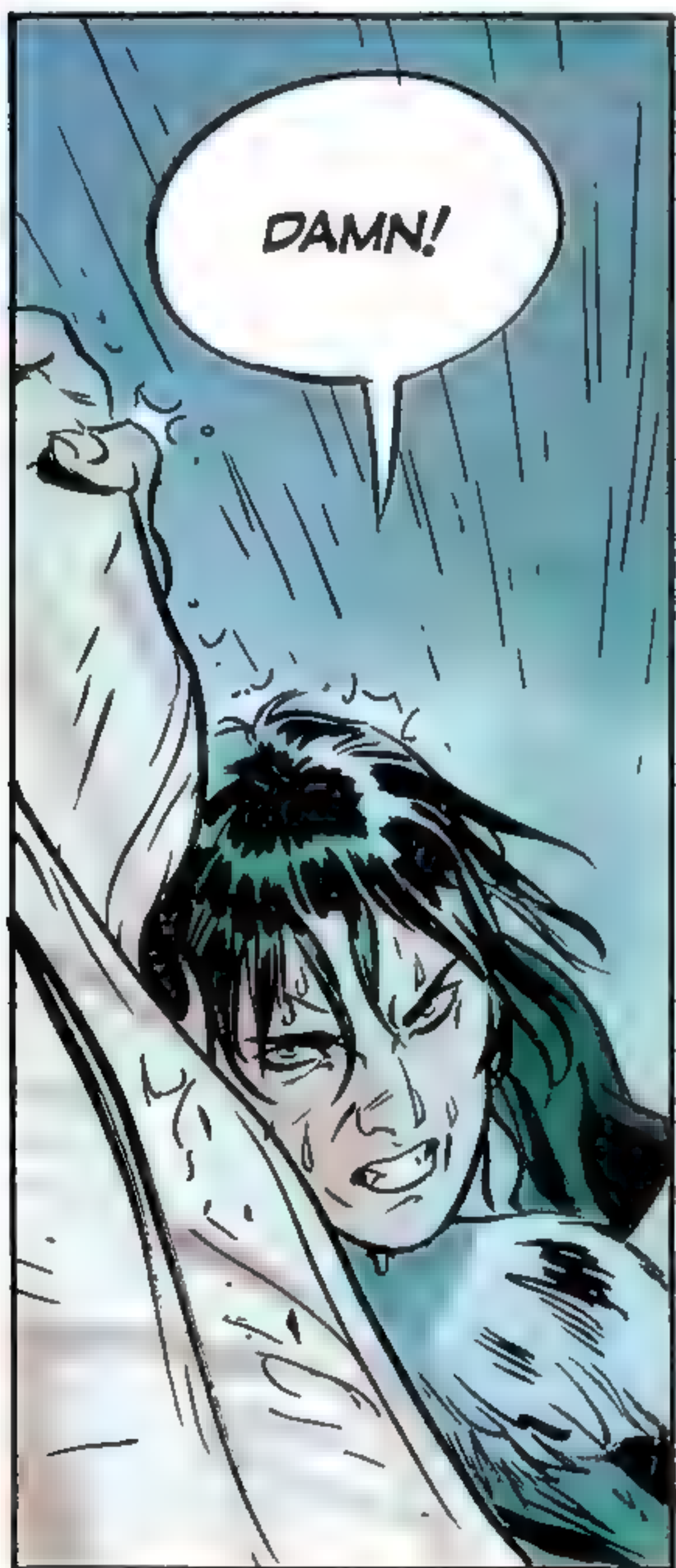
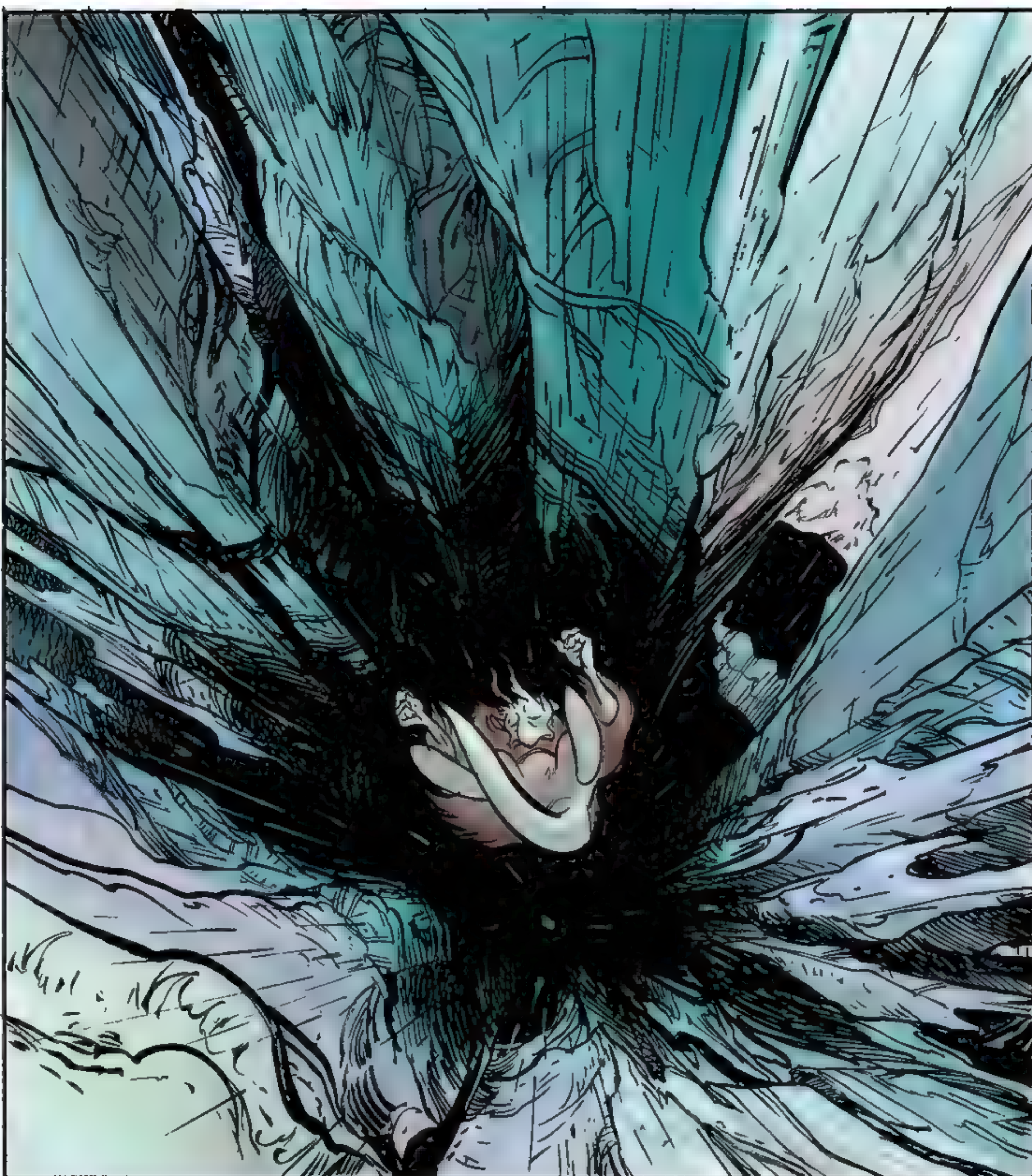
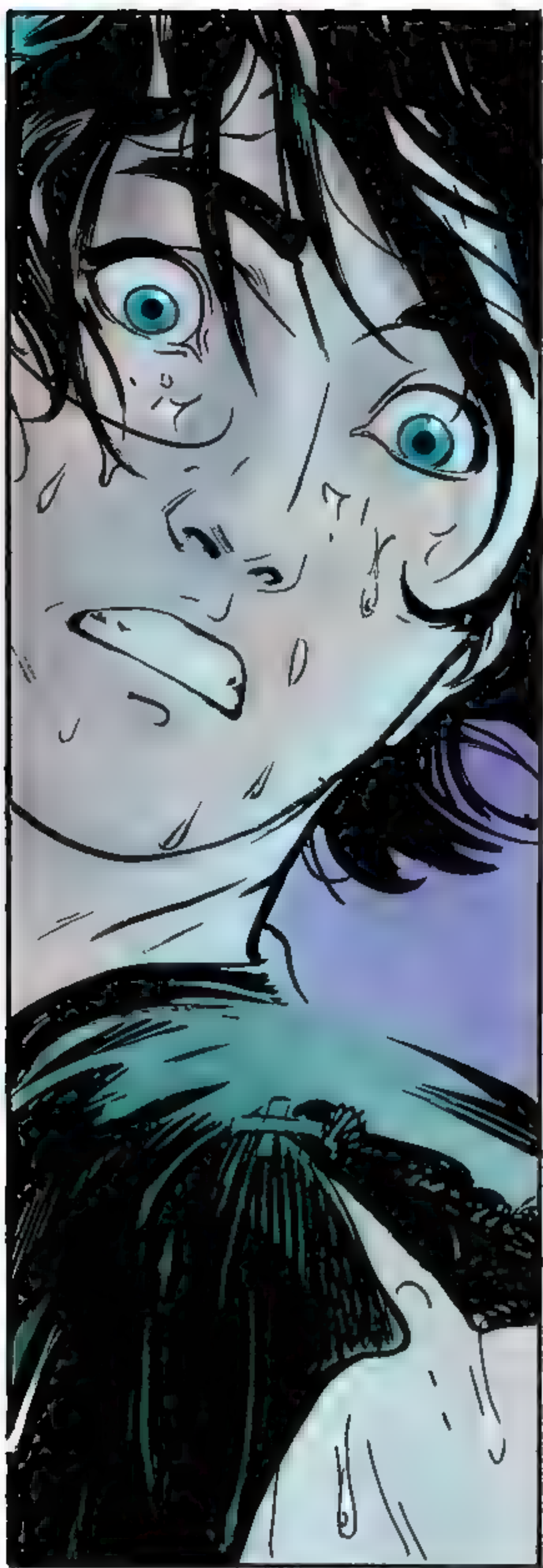
I LIED.

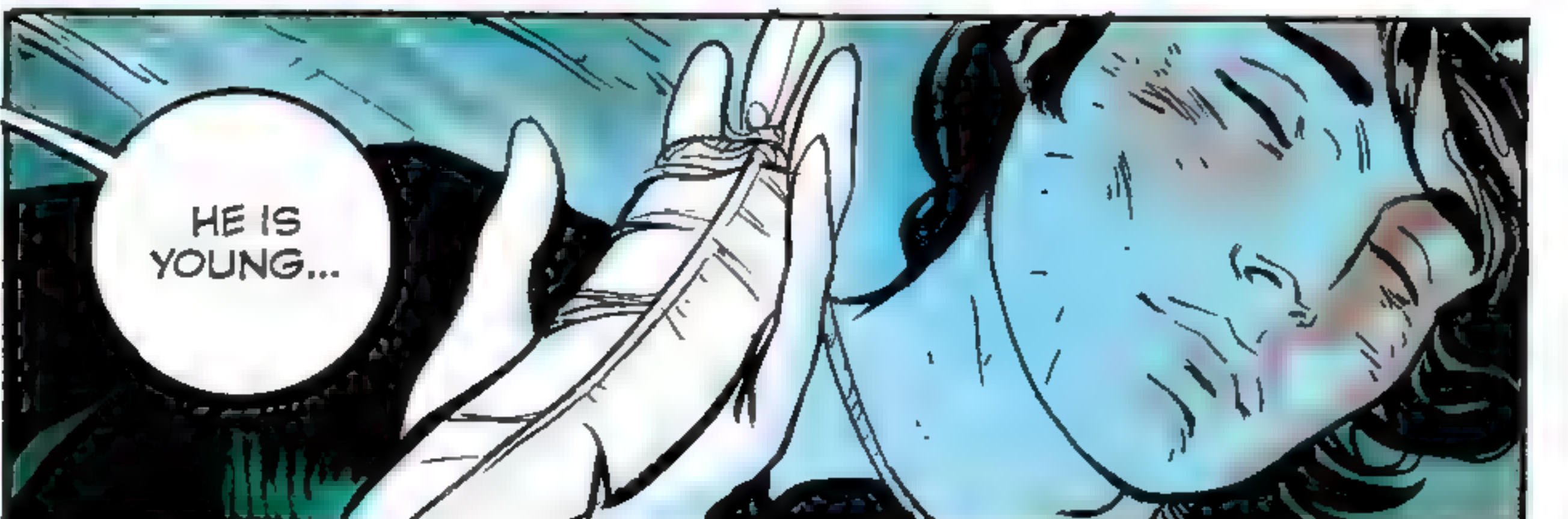
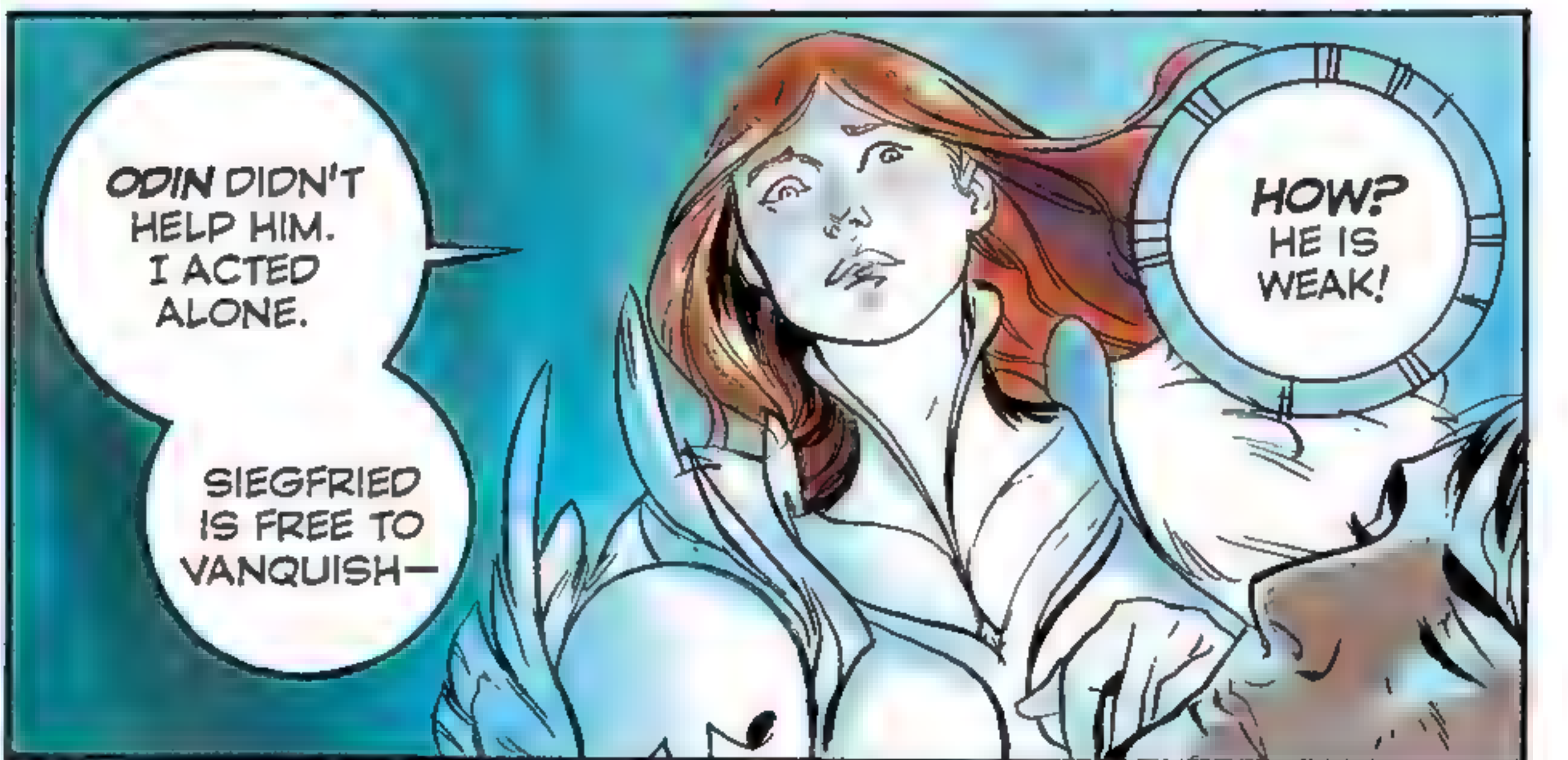
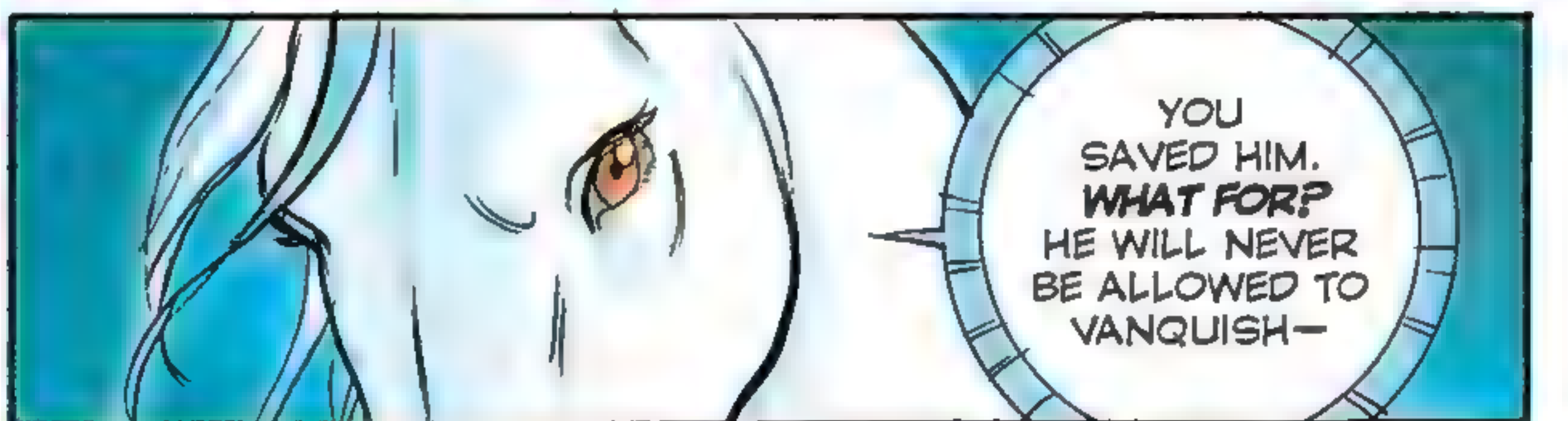
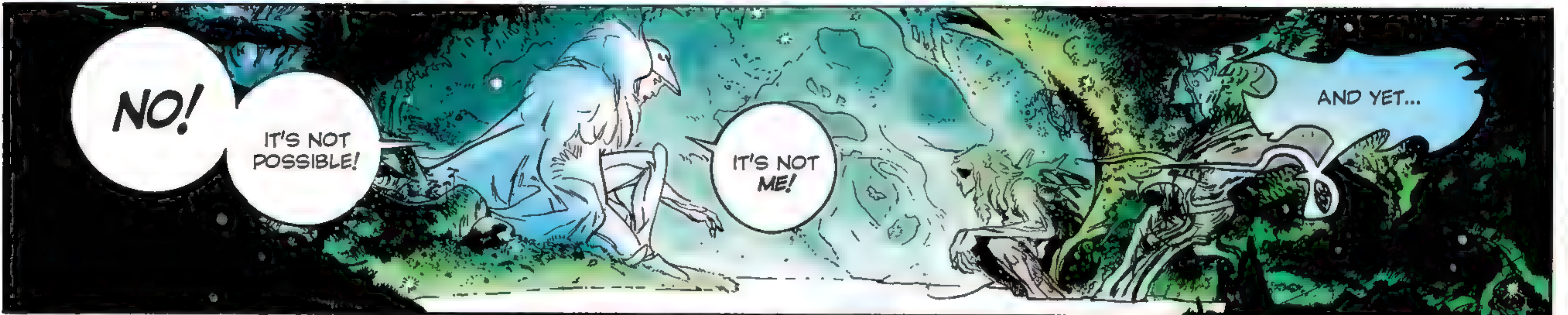
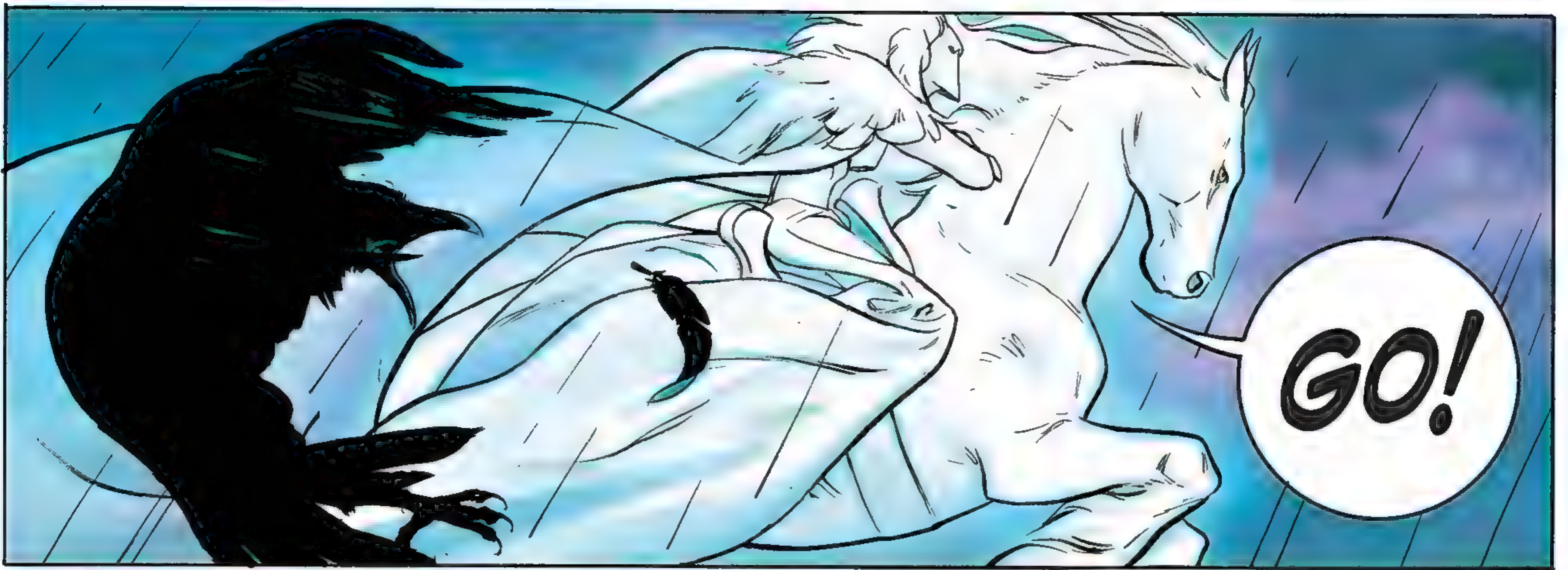


WHAT?!





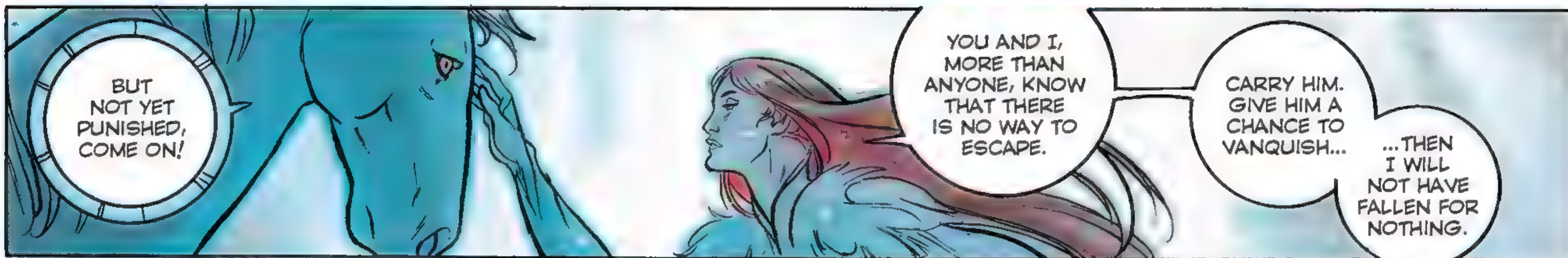






YOU'VE
ALREADY DONE
A LOT MORE
THAN YOU
SHOULD HAVE.
LET'S GO!

I'M ALREADY
CONDEMNED.



BUT
NOT YET
PUNISHED,
COME ON!

YOU AND I,
MORE THAN
ANYONE, KNOW
THAT THERE
IS NO WAY TO
ESCAPE.

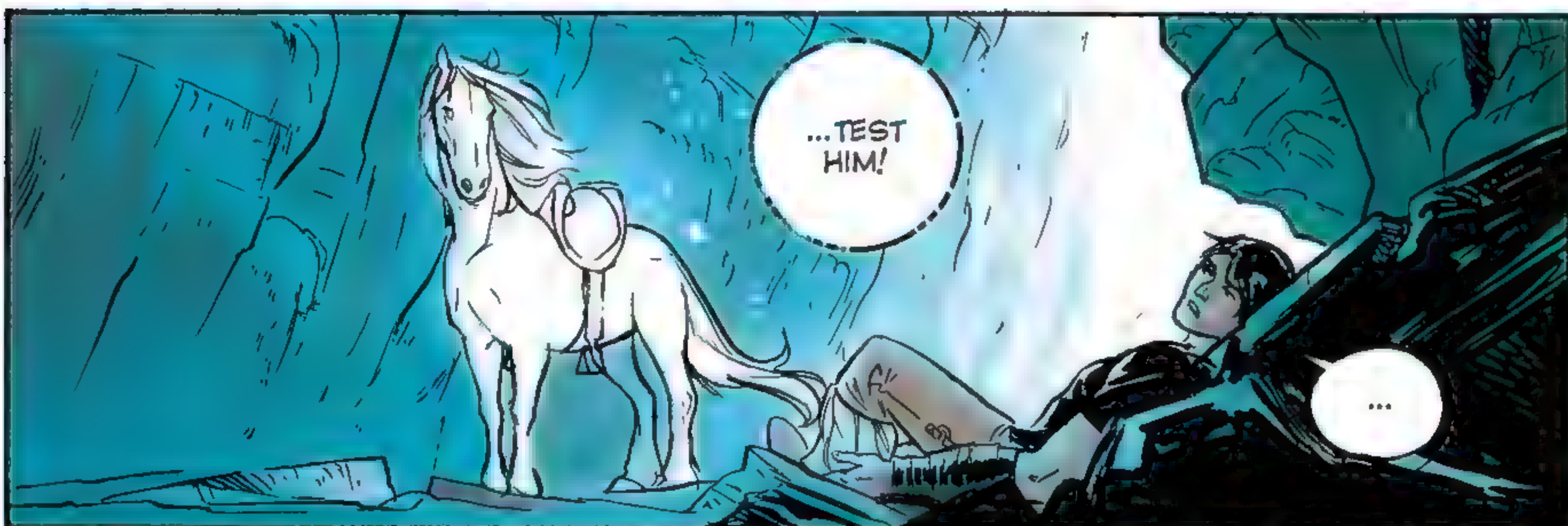
CARRY HIM.
GIVE HIM A
CHANCE TO
VANQUISH...

...THEN
I WILL
NOT HAVE
FALLEN FOR
NOTHING.



I HOPE
HE'S
WORTH
IT!

IF YOU
ARE NOT
CERTAIN...



...TEST
HIM!

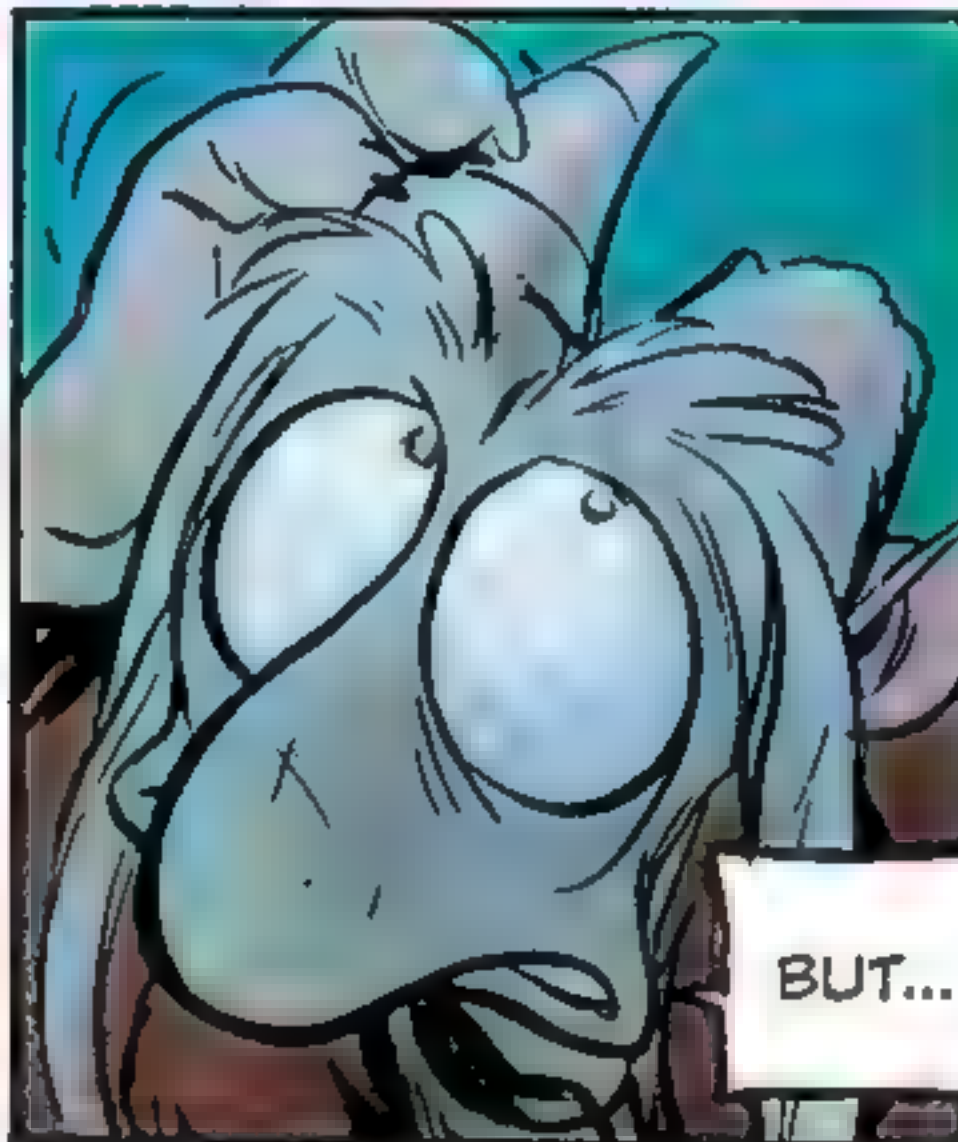
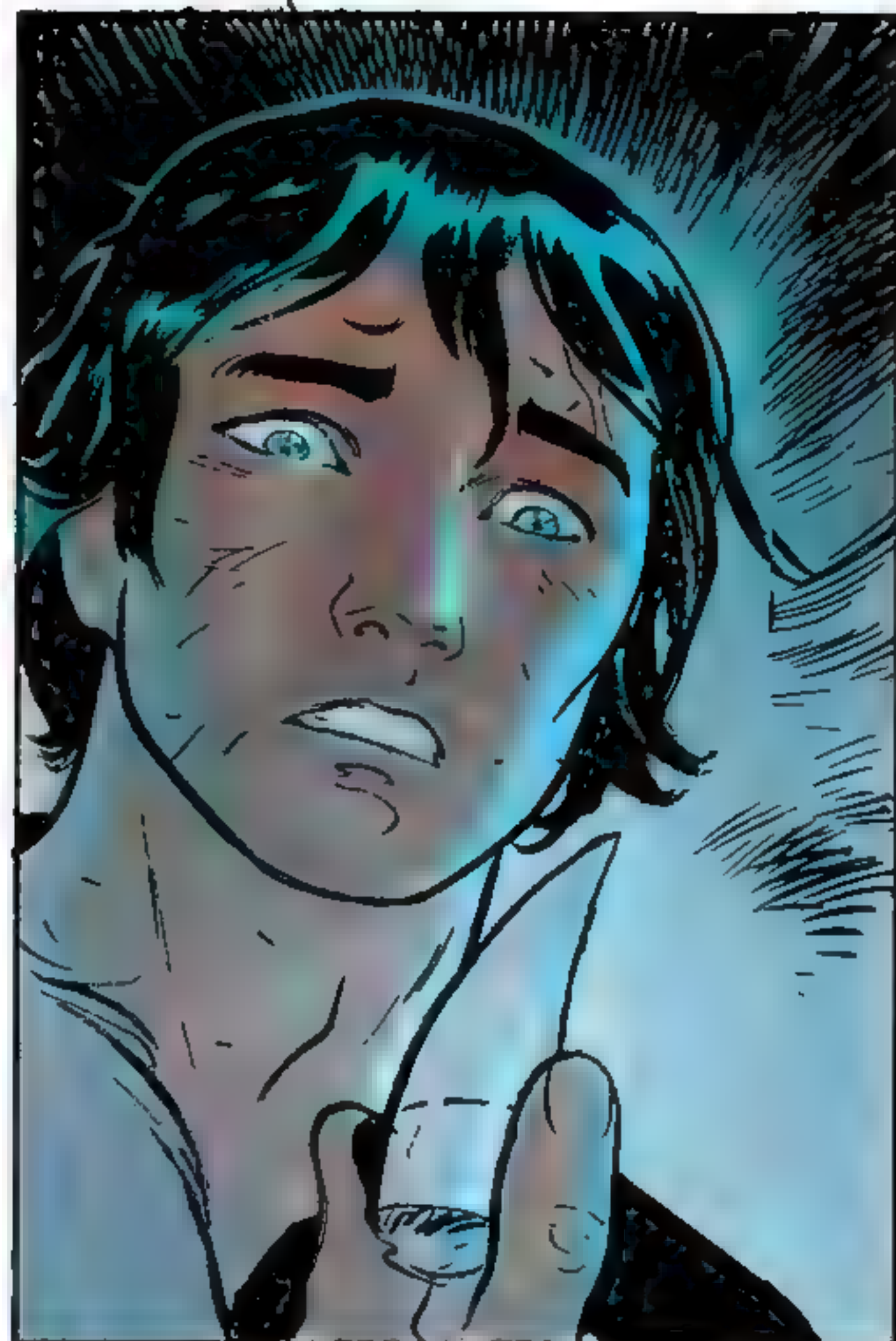
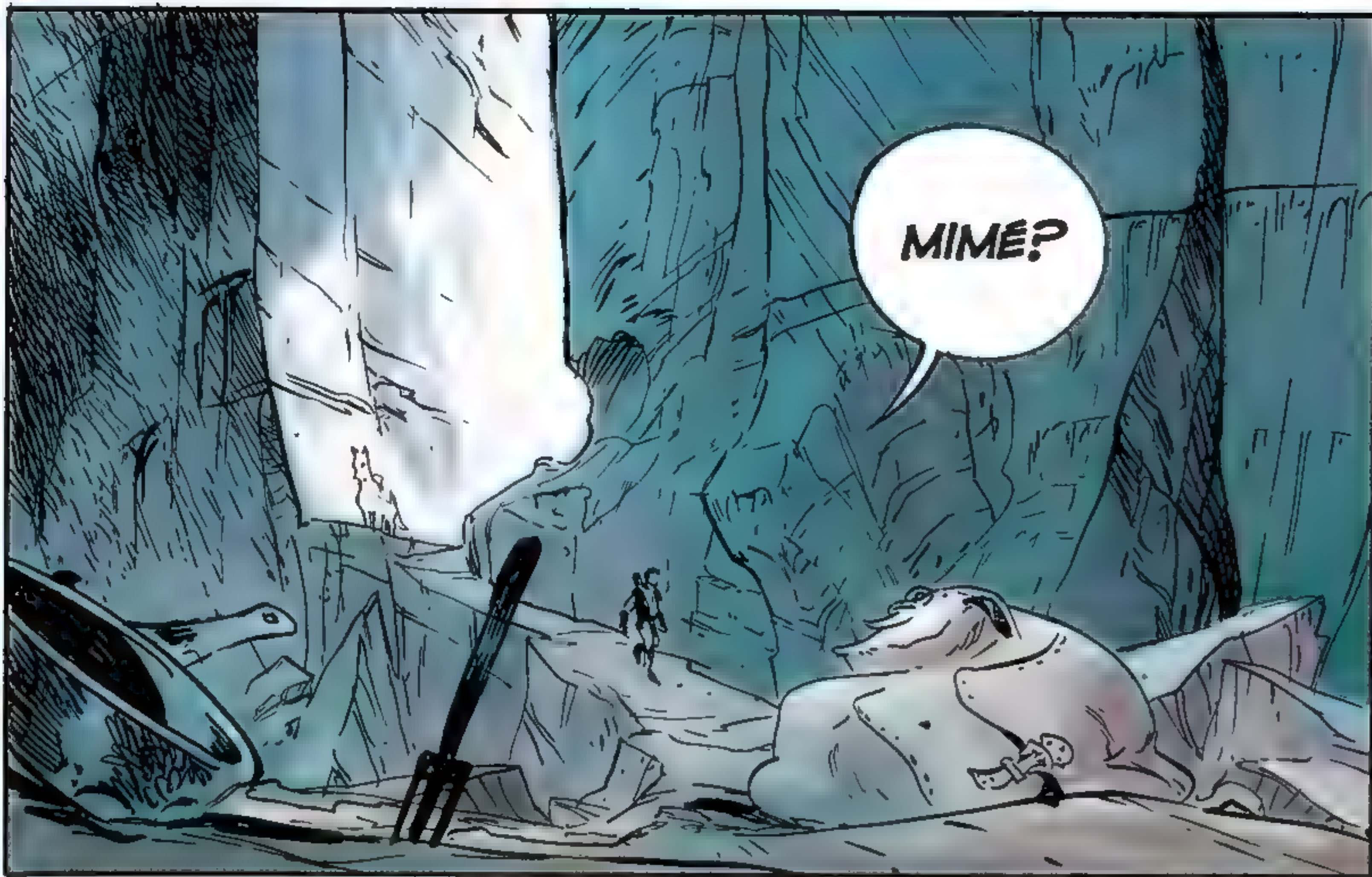
...



OOOOOH...



MIME!





MY SWORD!

EHP?

OH, YEAH. IT'S YOUR SWORD...
WHAT'S IT DOING HERE?



WHAT IS IT DOING HERE? YOU FOUND IT IN THE SWAMP AND YOU HID IT!

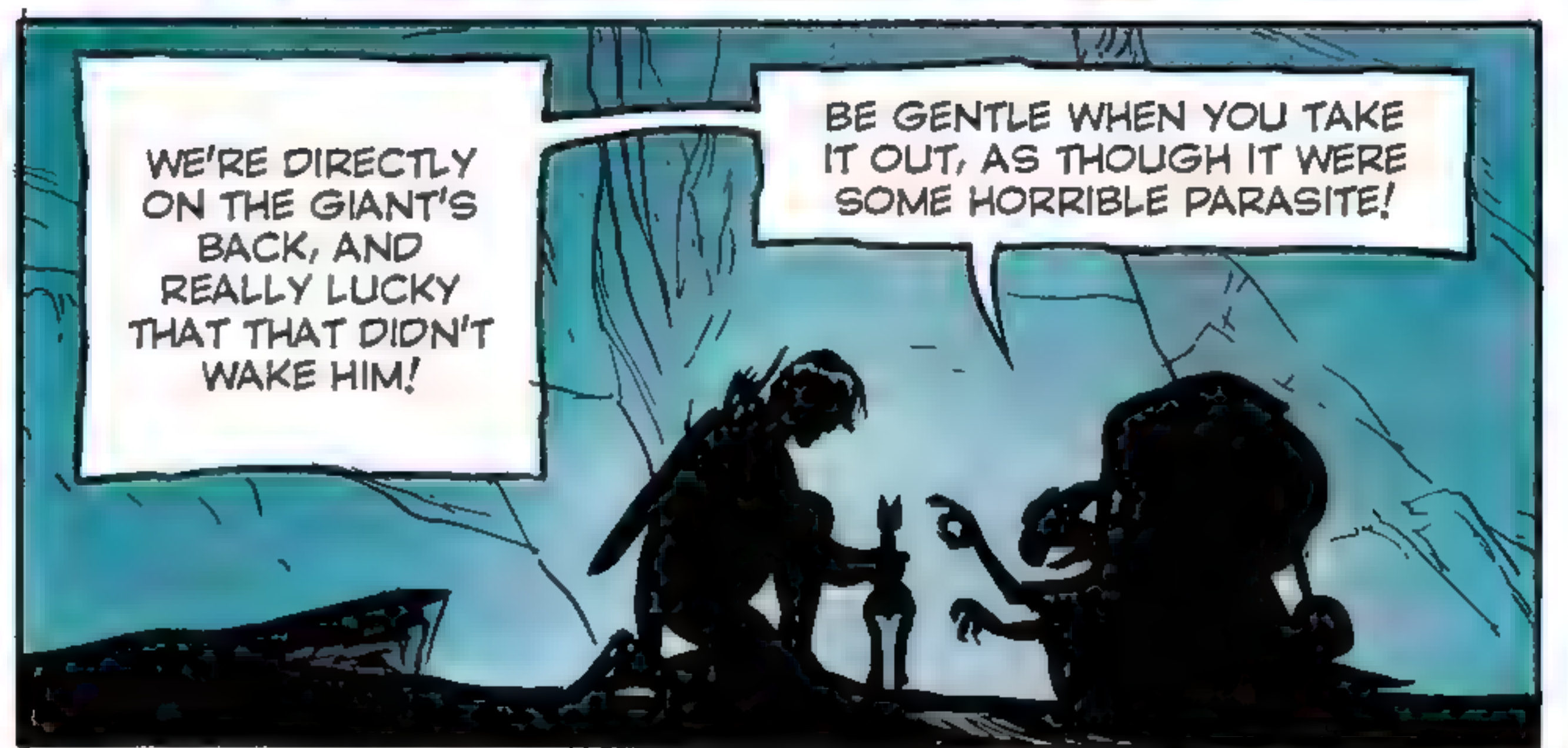
I DID NOT!

OH, NO?!



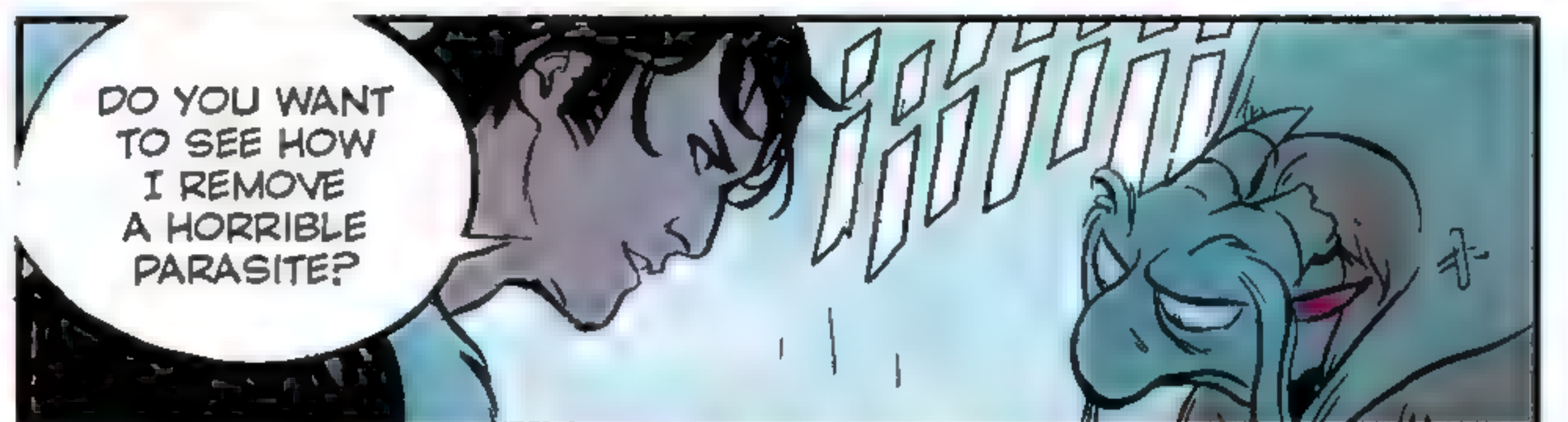
I'M GOING TO RIP OFF YOUR OTHER HORN!

STOP!



WE'RE DIRECTLY ON THE GIANT'S BACK, AND REALLY LUCKY THAT THAT DIDN'T WAKE HIM!

BE GENTLE WHEN YOU TAKE IT OUT, AS THOUGH IT WERE SOME HORRIBLE PARASITE!

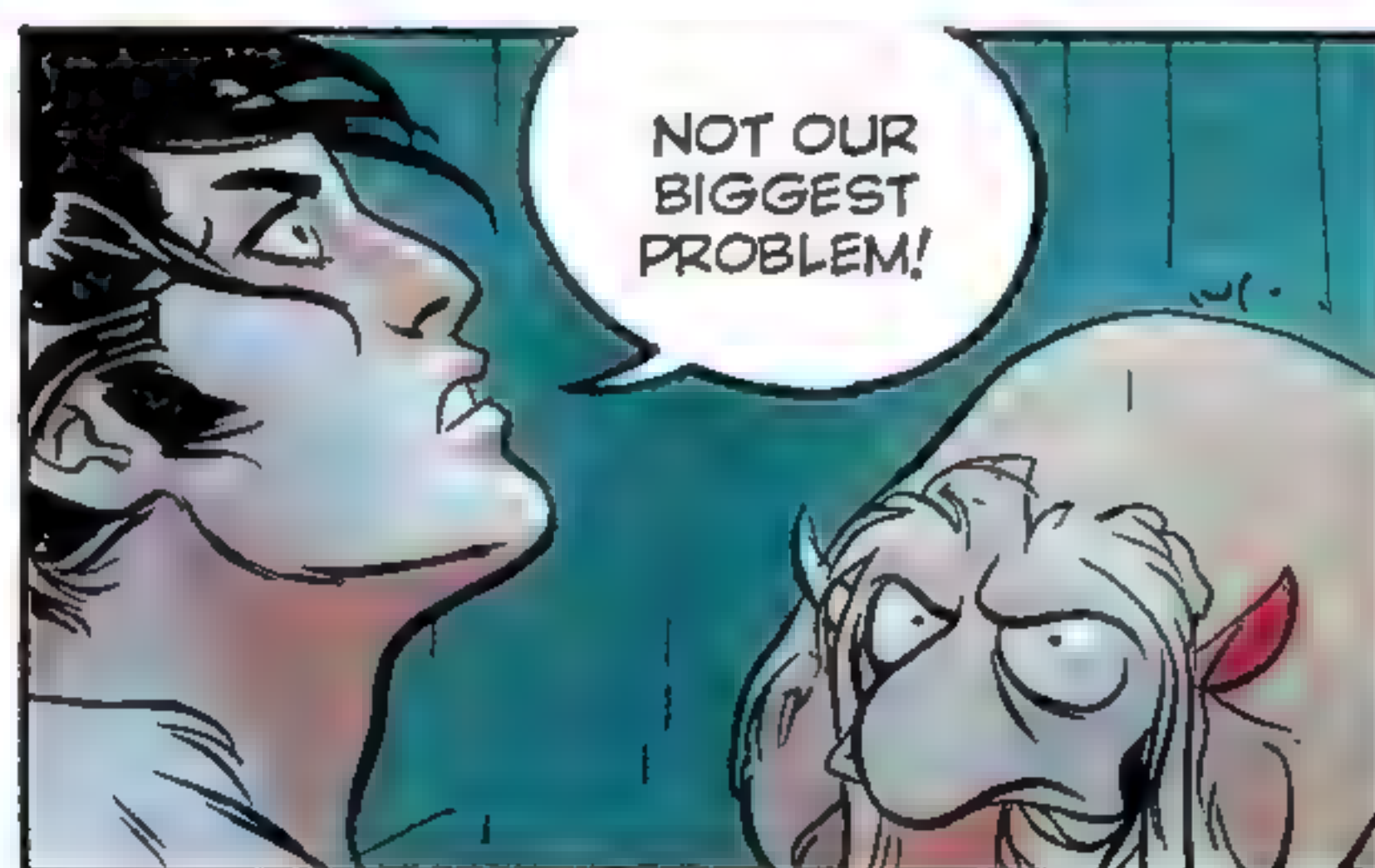


DO YOU WANT TO SEE HOW I REMOVE A HORRIBLE PARASITE?

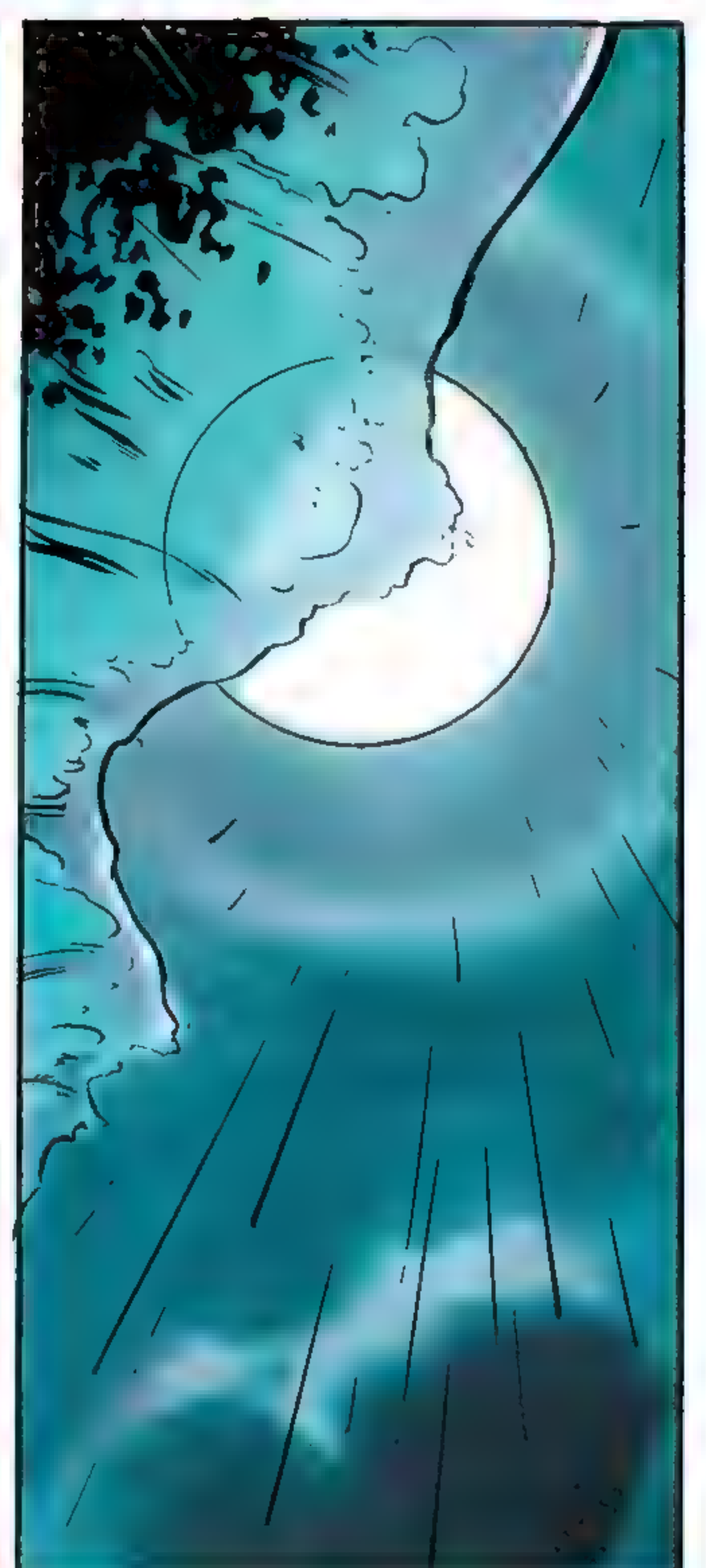
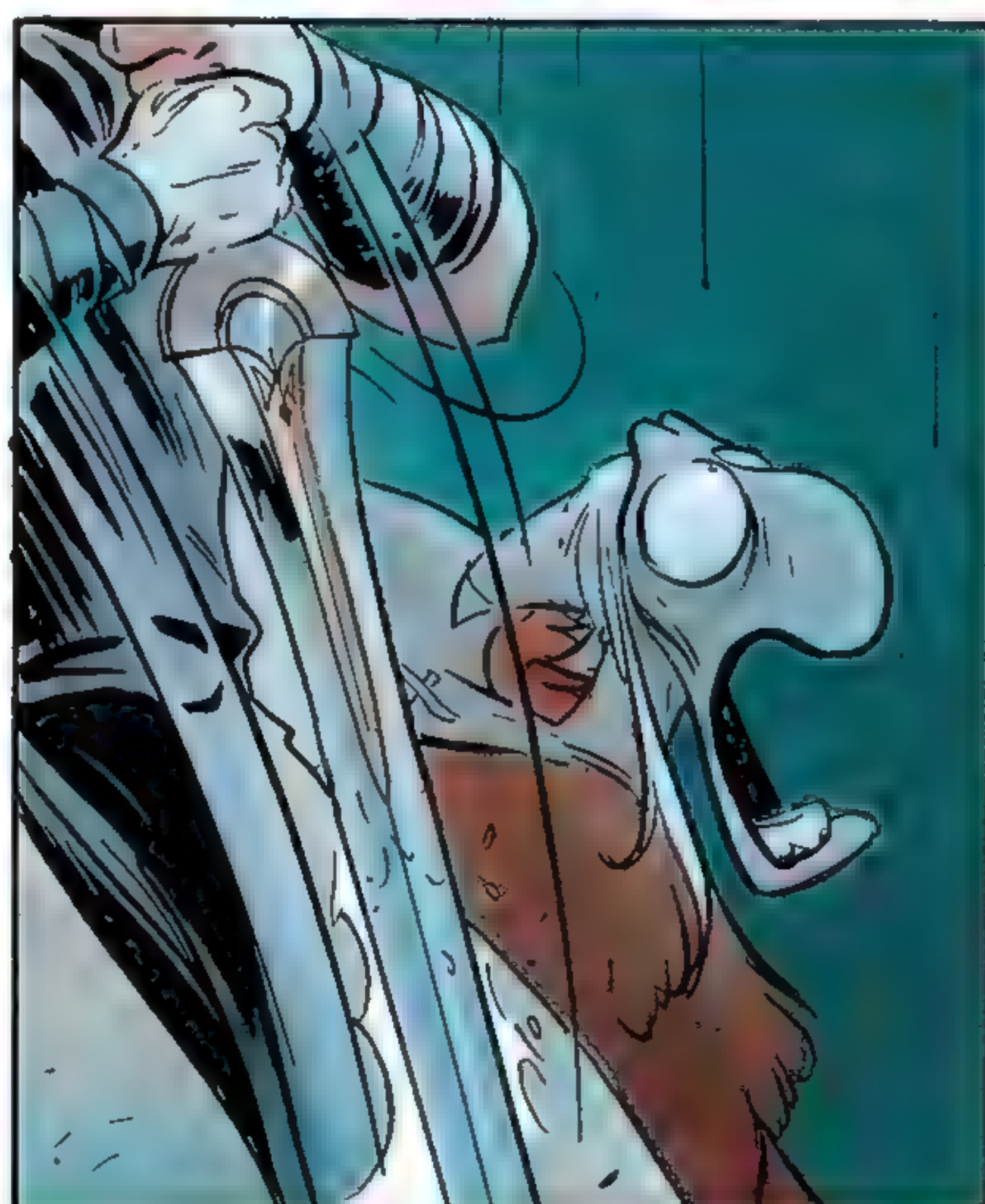


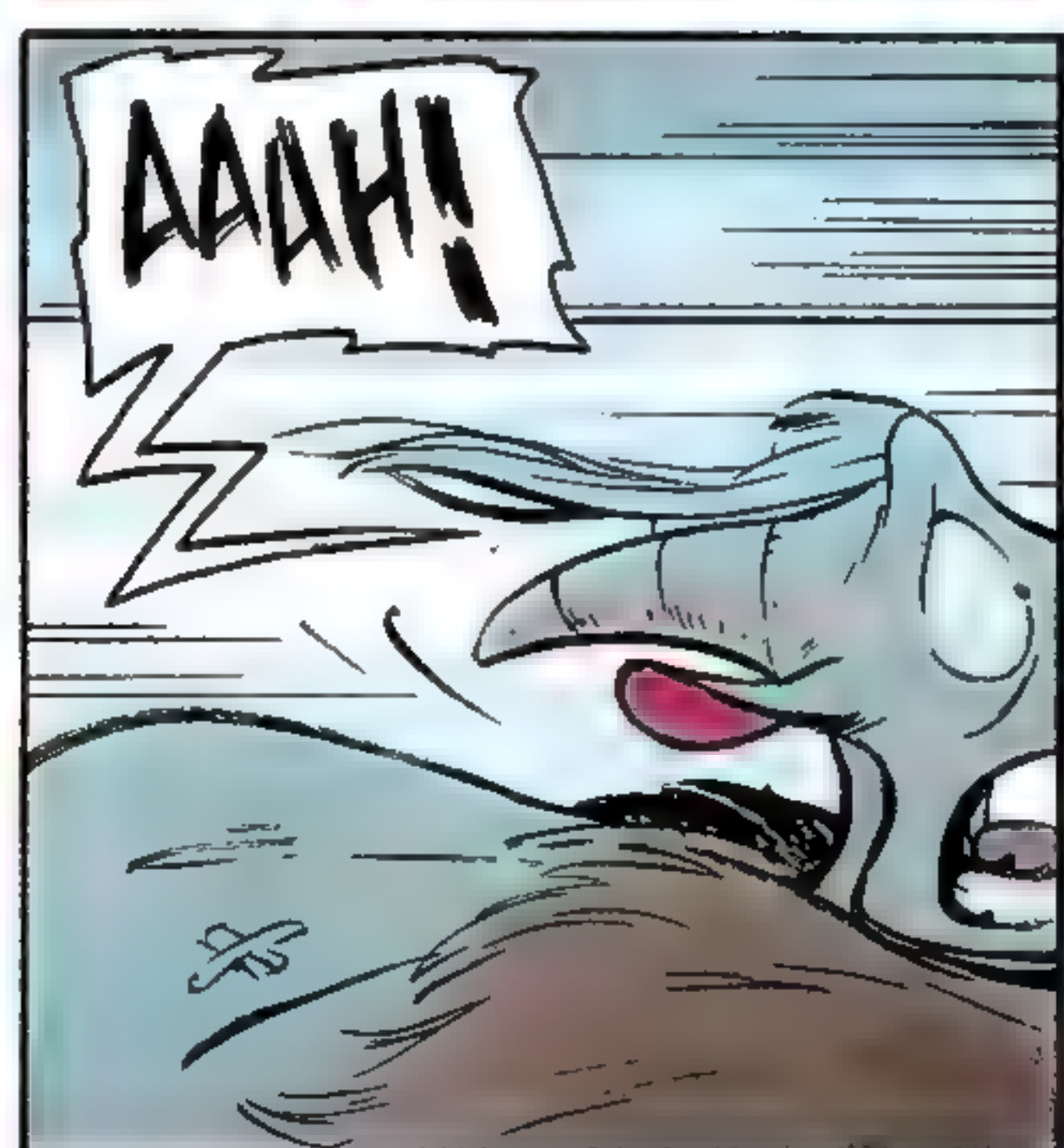
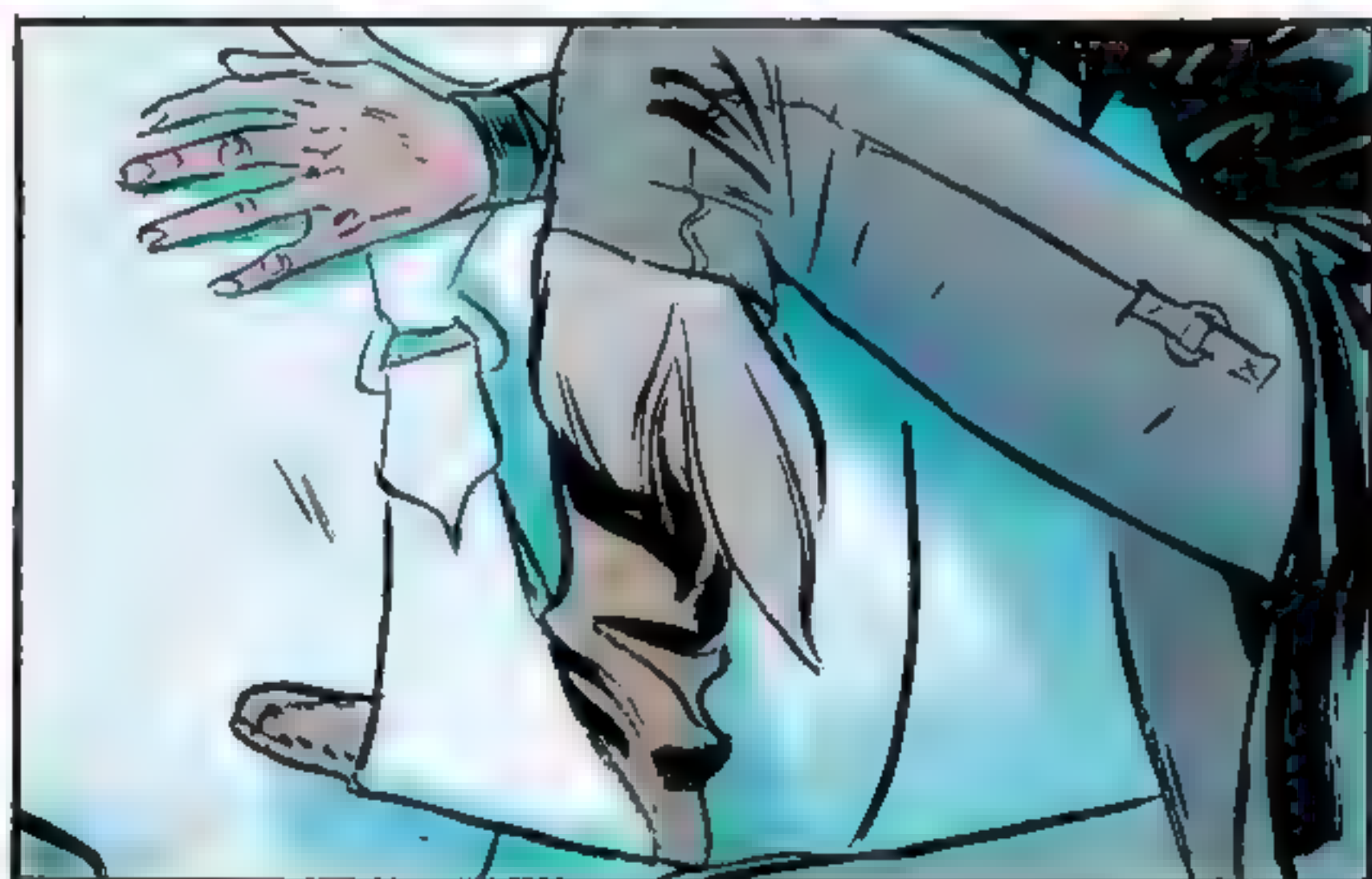
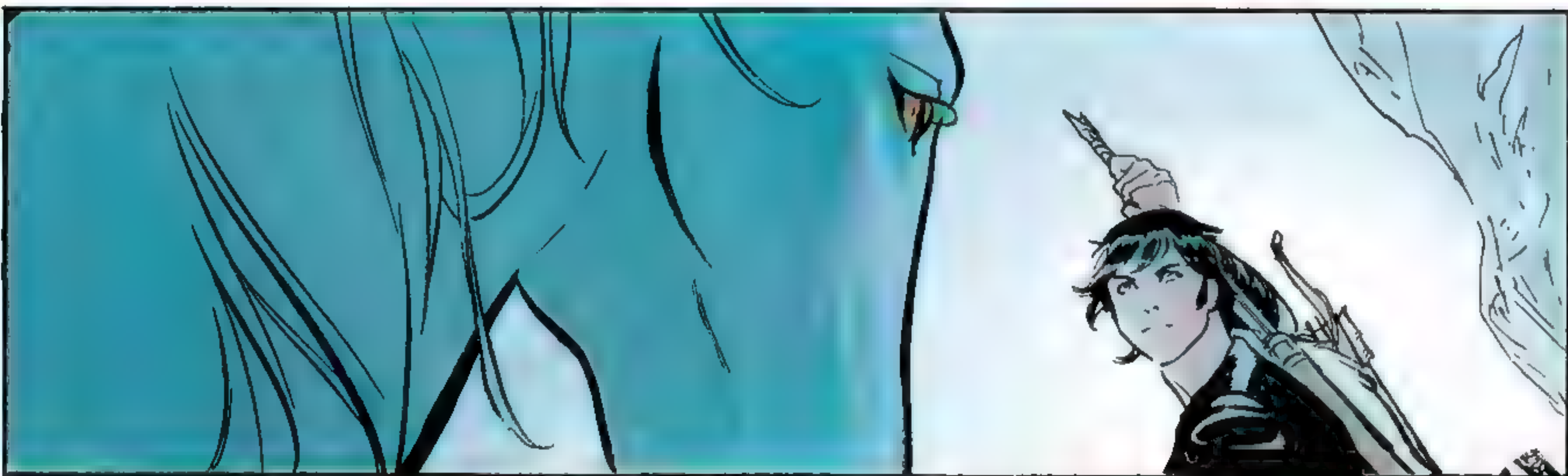
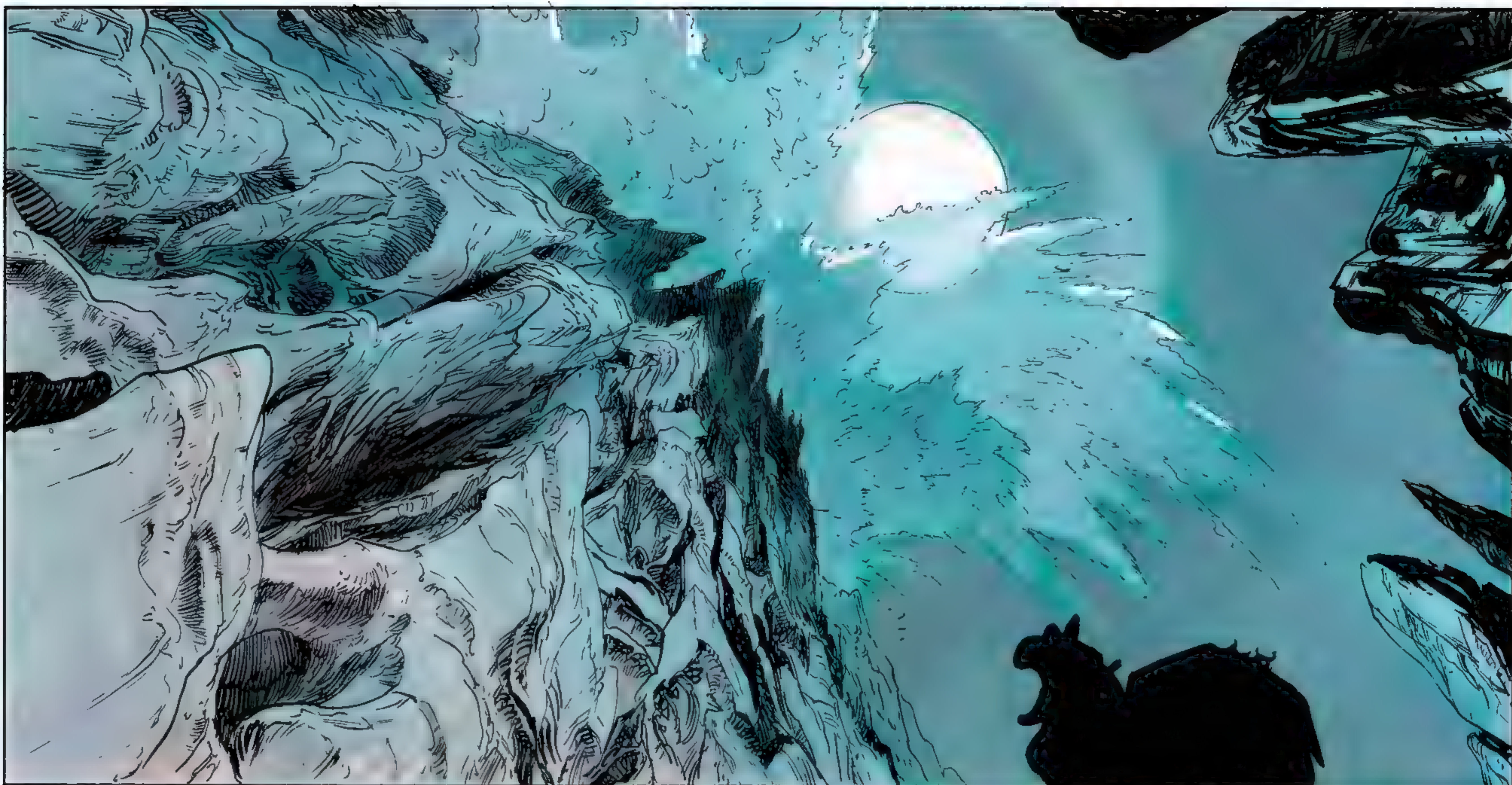
AH!

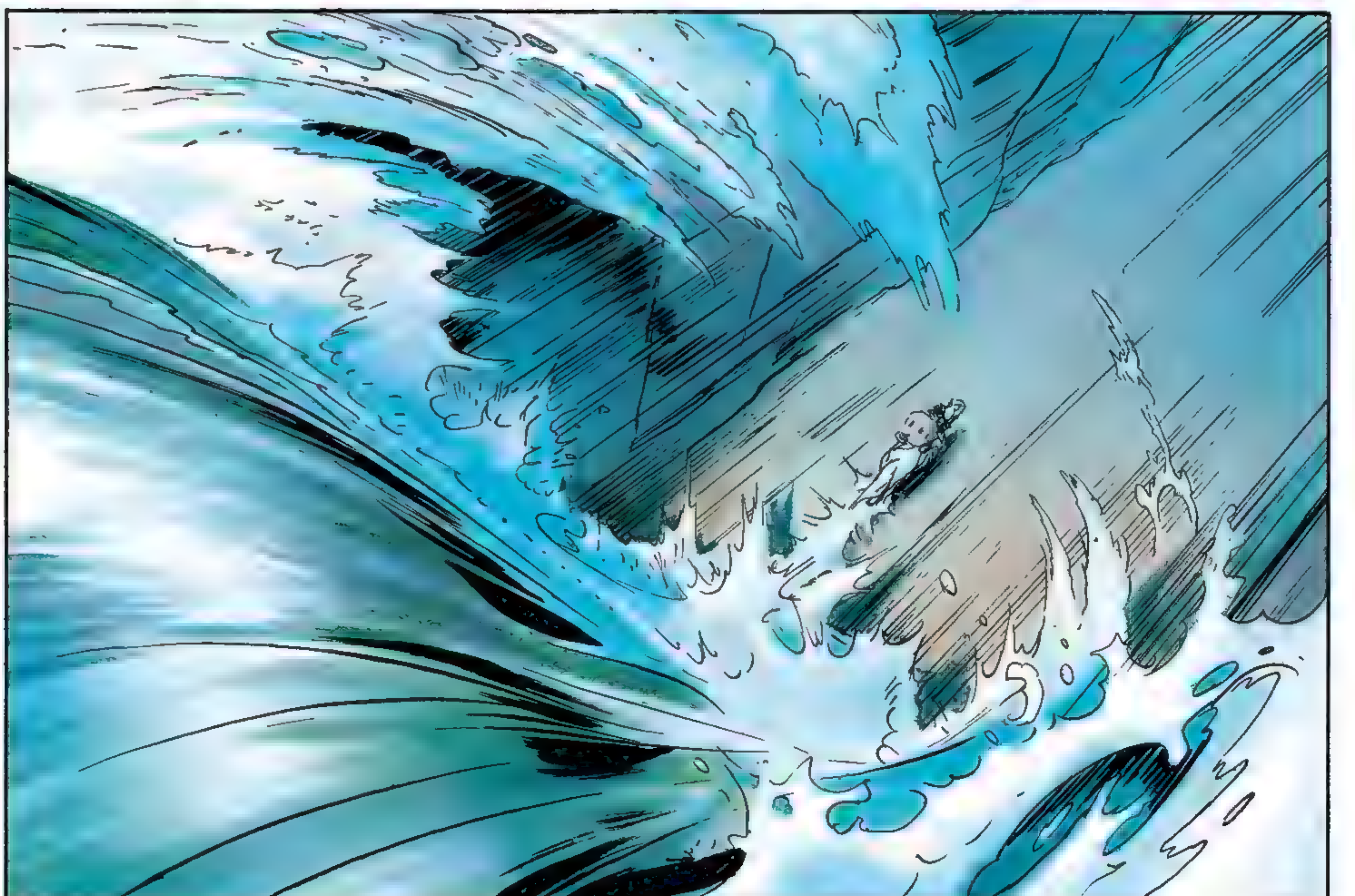
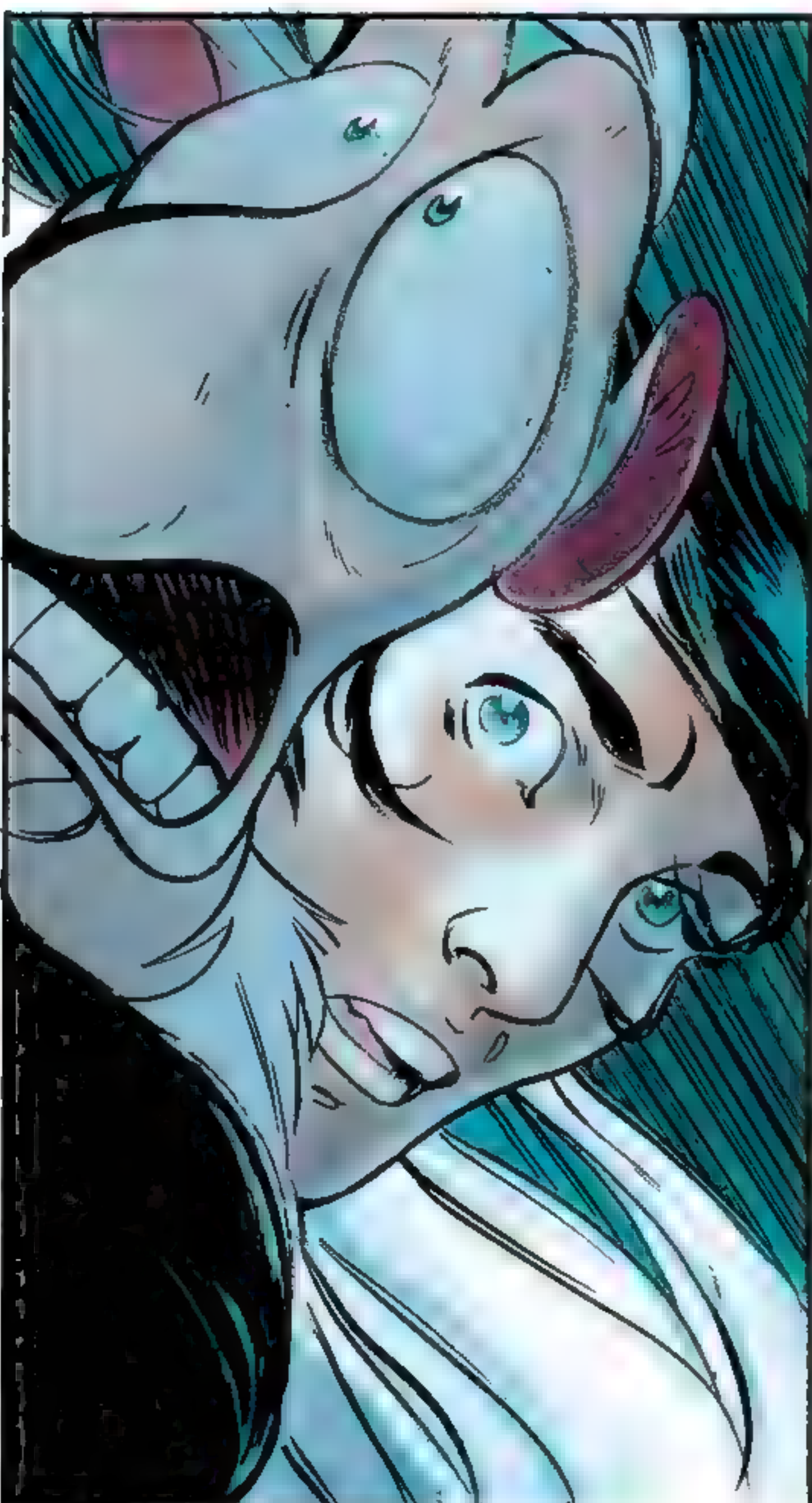
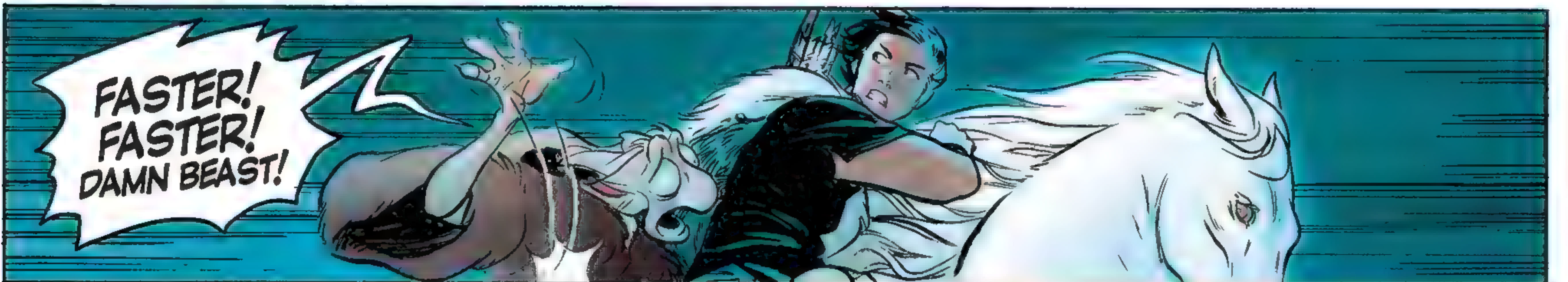
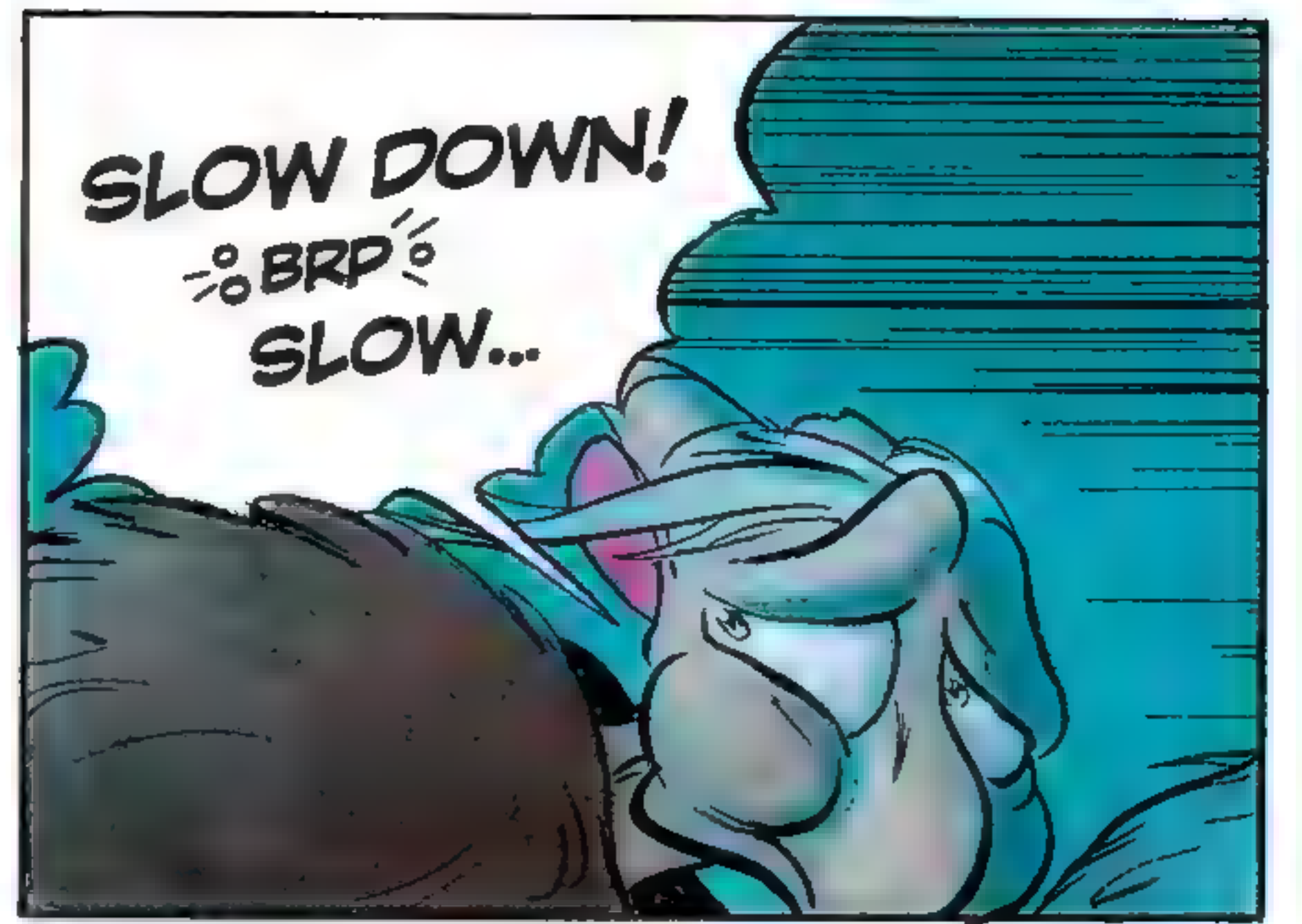
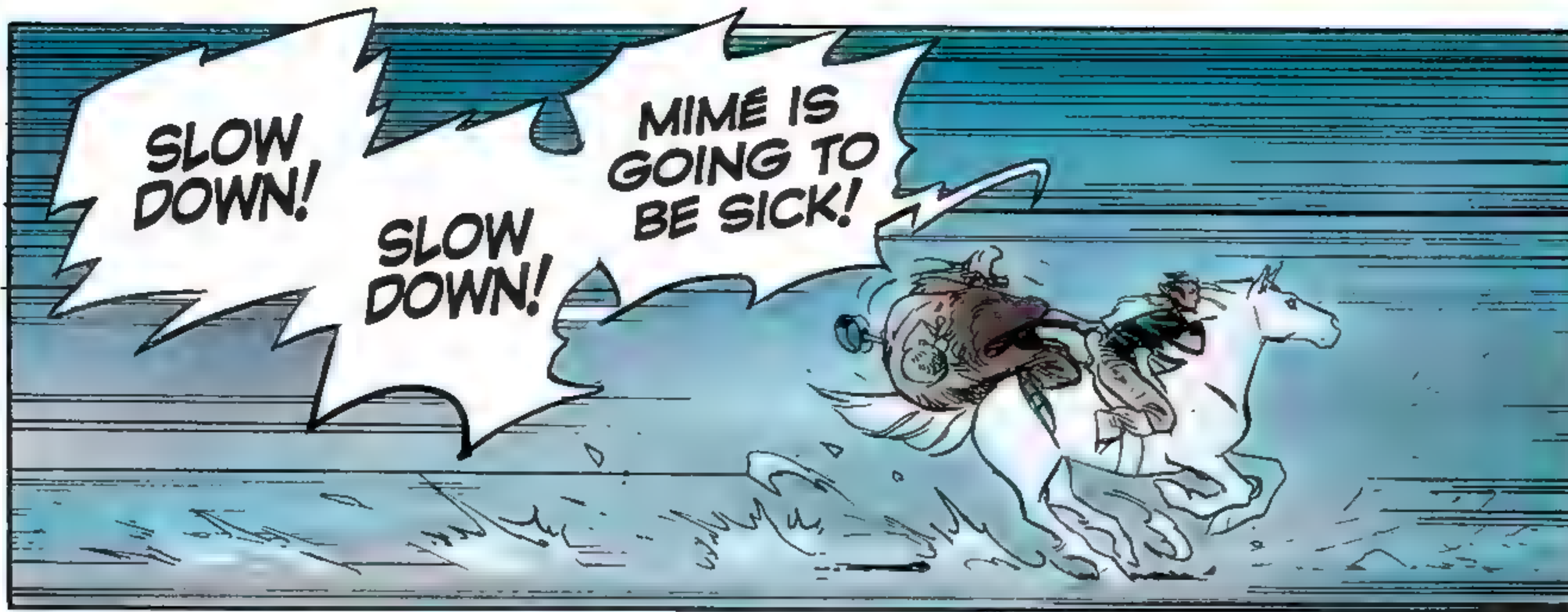
WHAT'S THAT?!

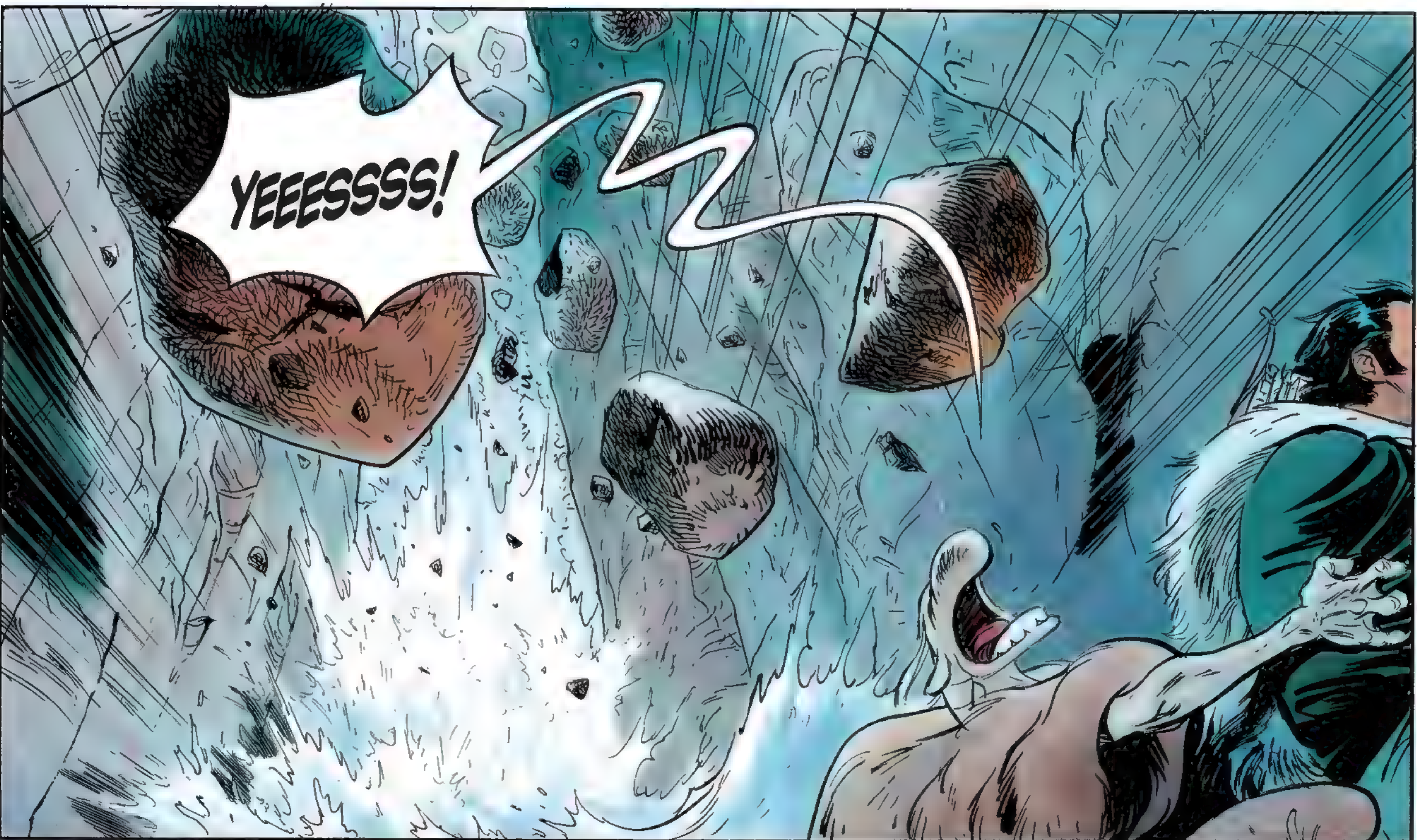
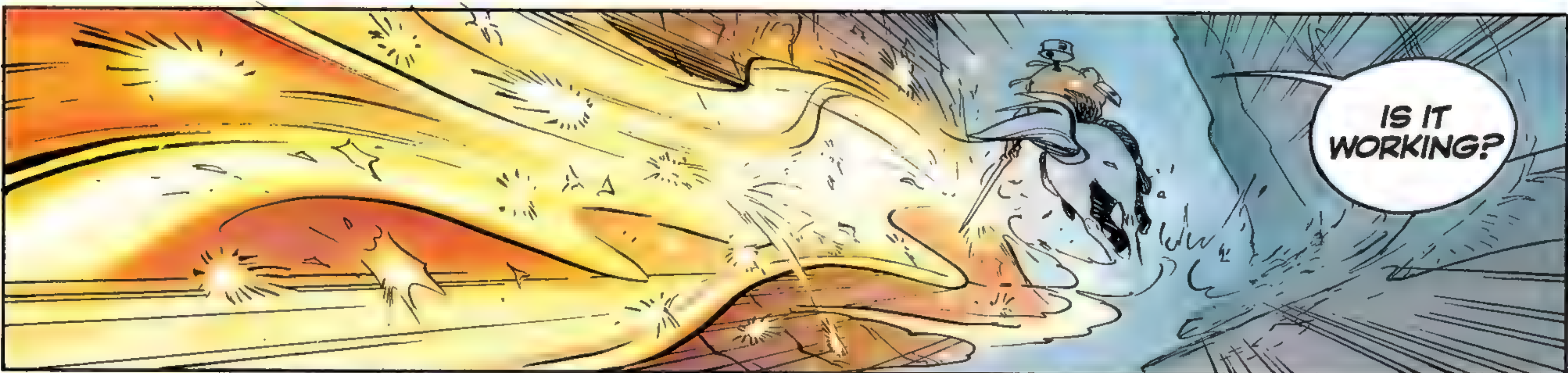
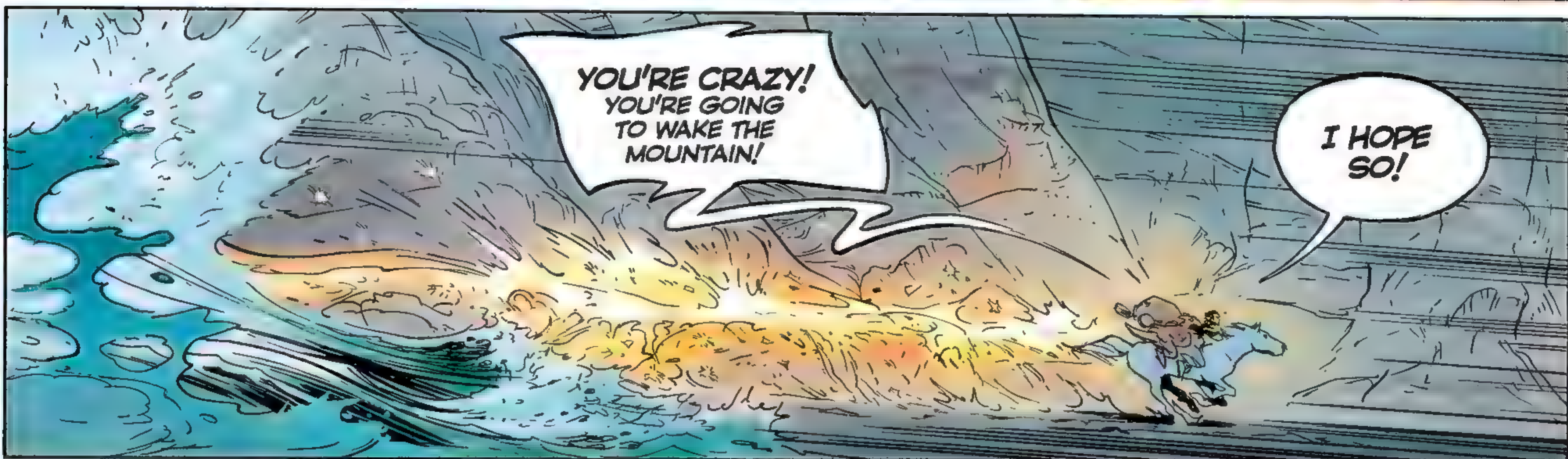
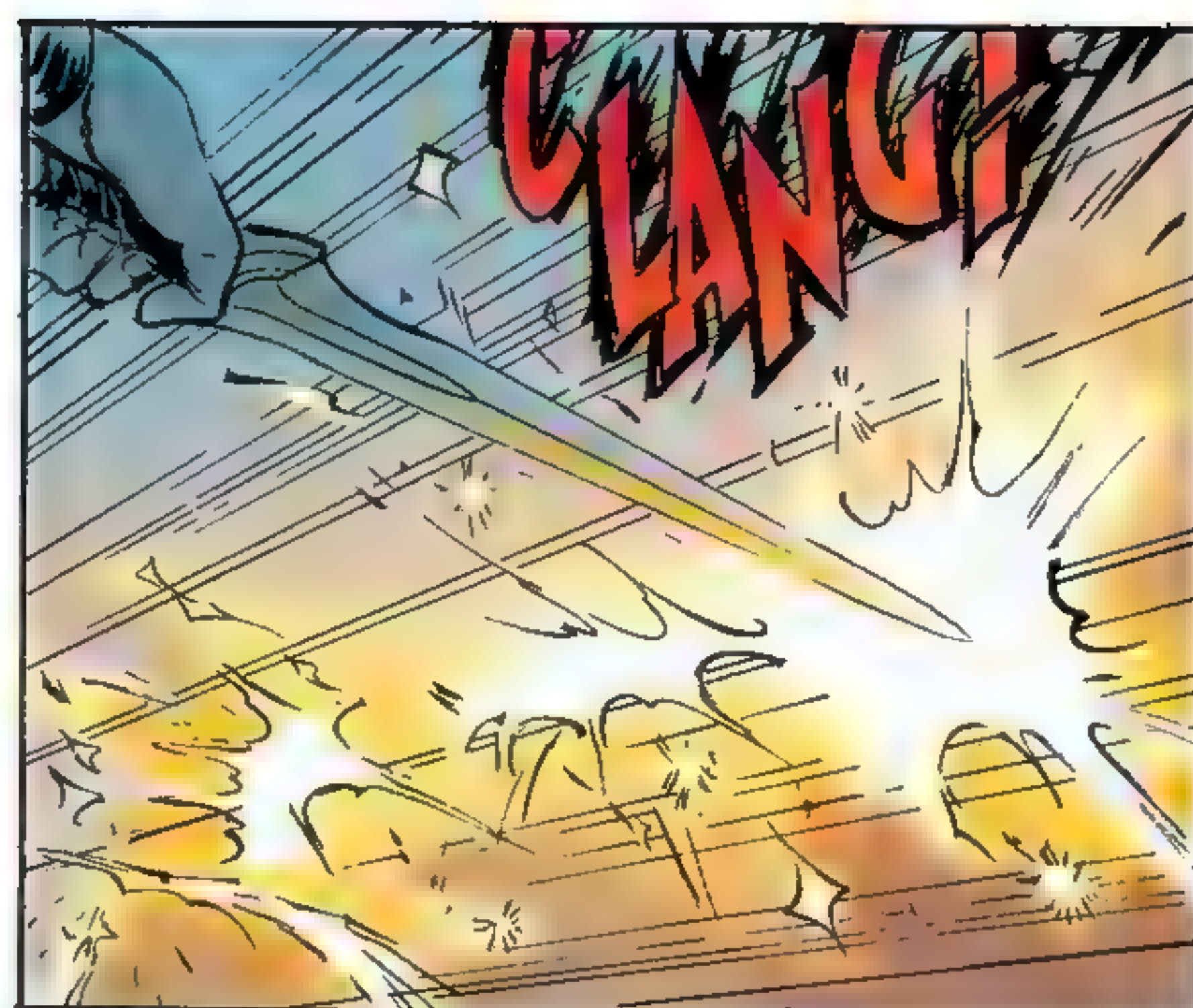
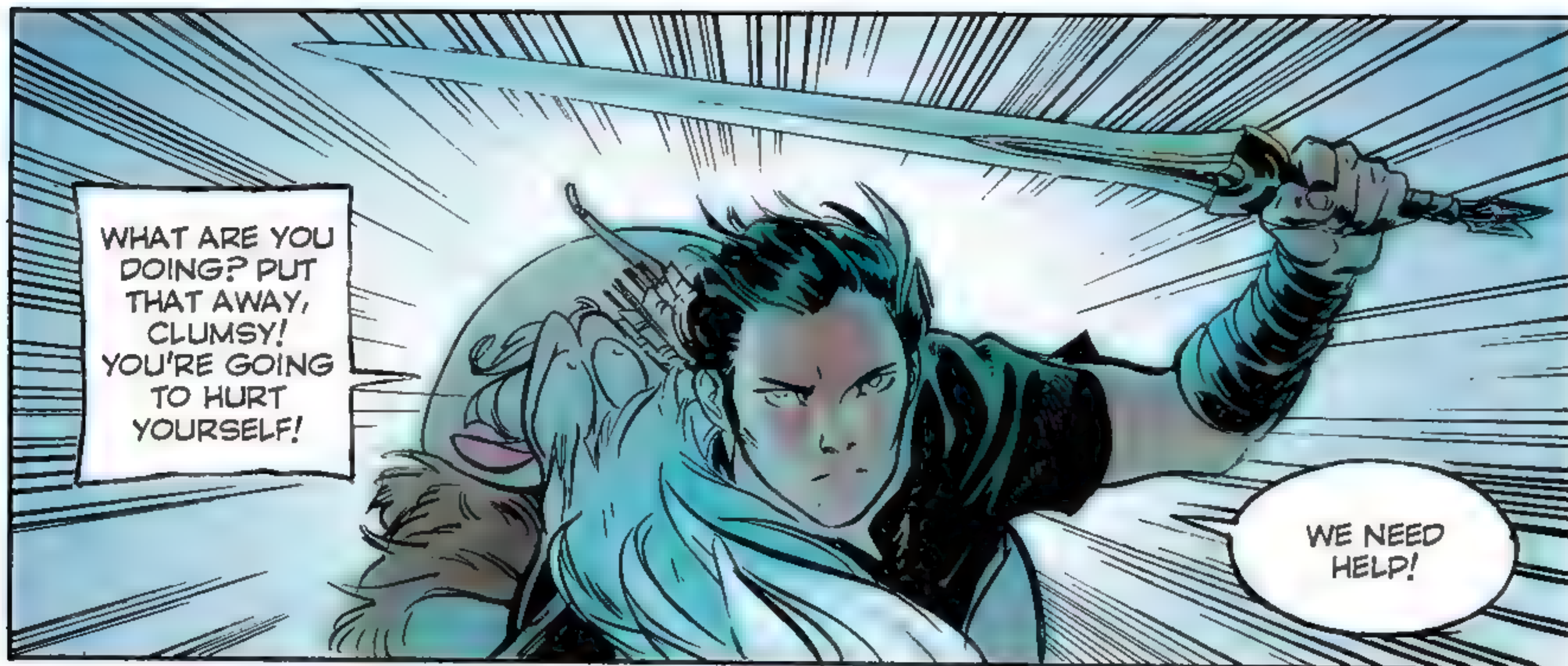


NOT OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM!











SO, WE
CAN TURN
AROUND?



TURN
AROUND?!

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN
TURN—



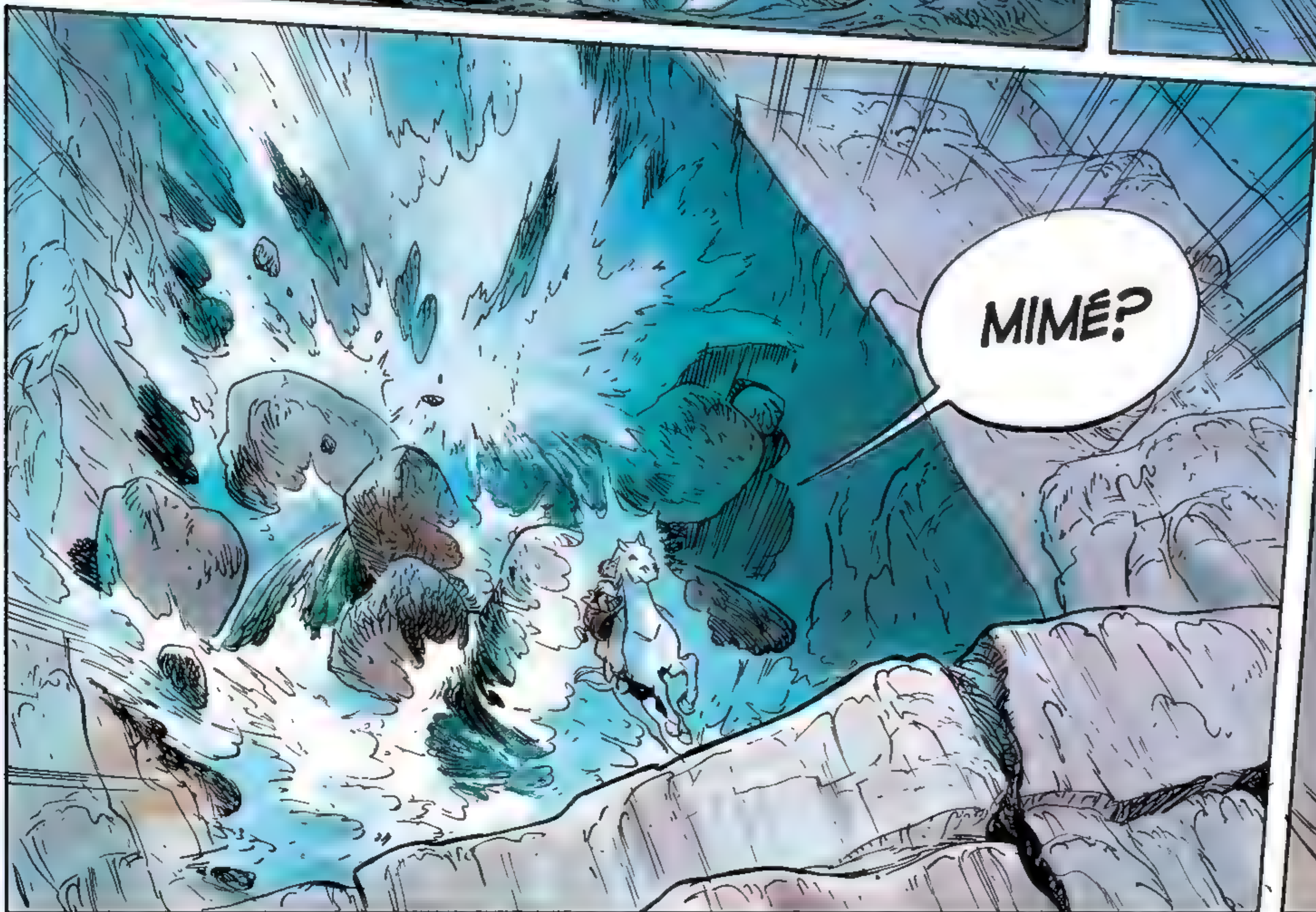
AH!
THE WIND
GIANT!

I WASN'T
THINKING
OF HIM.

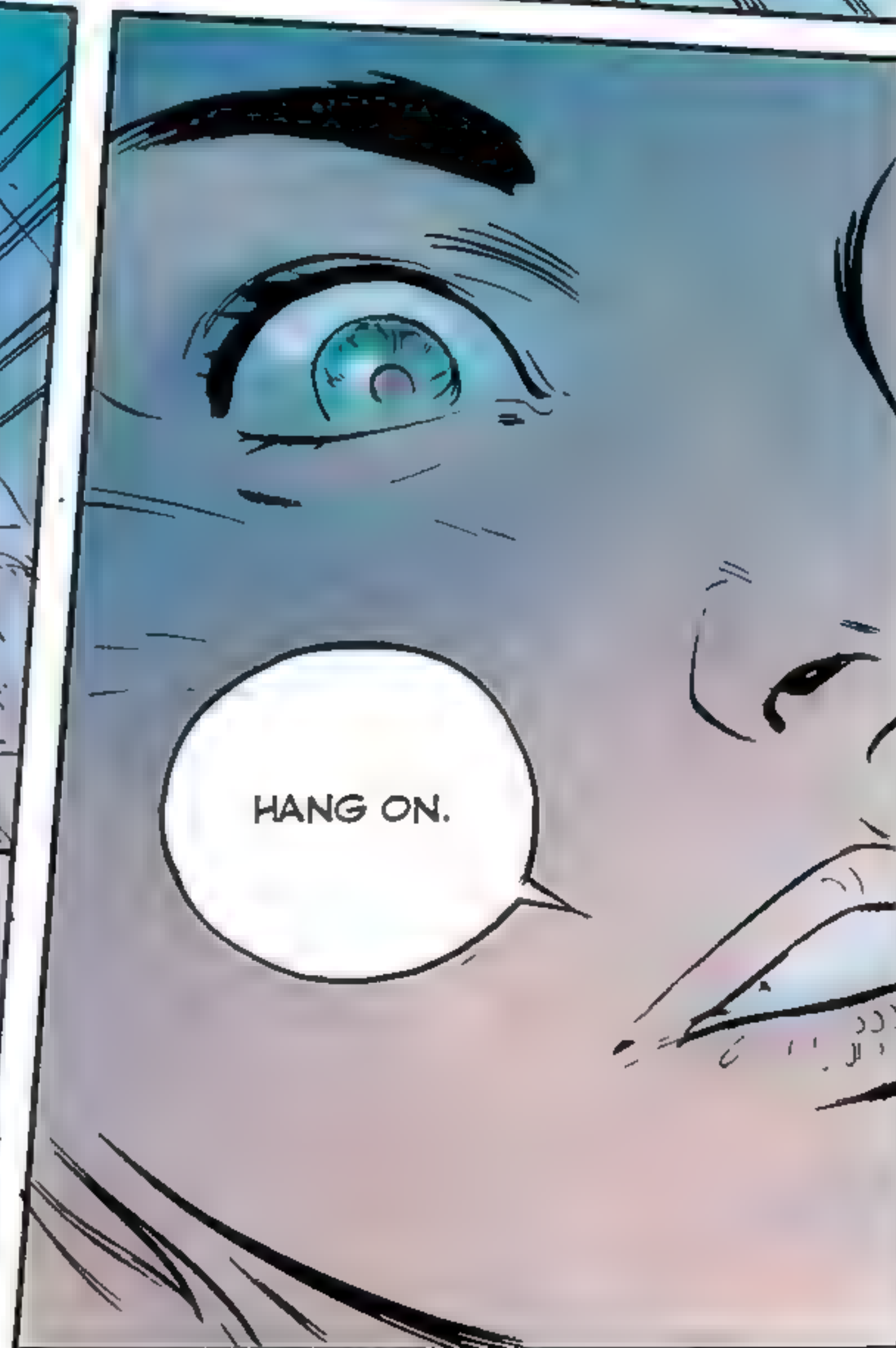


AAAHH!

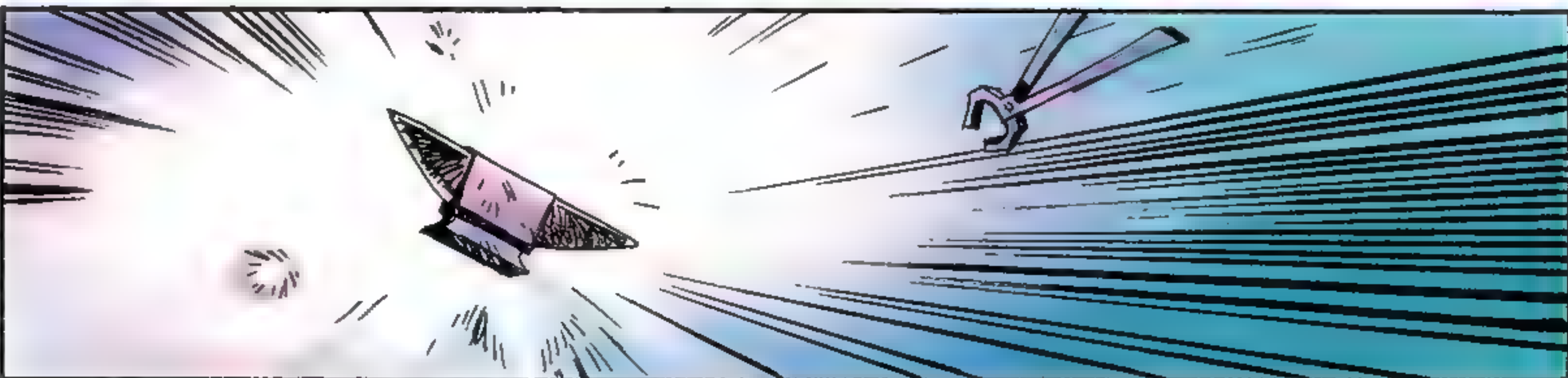
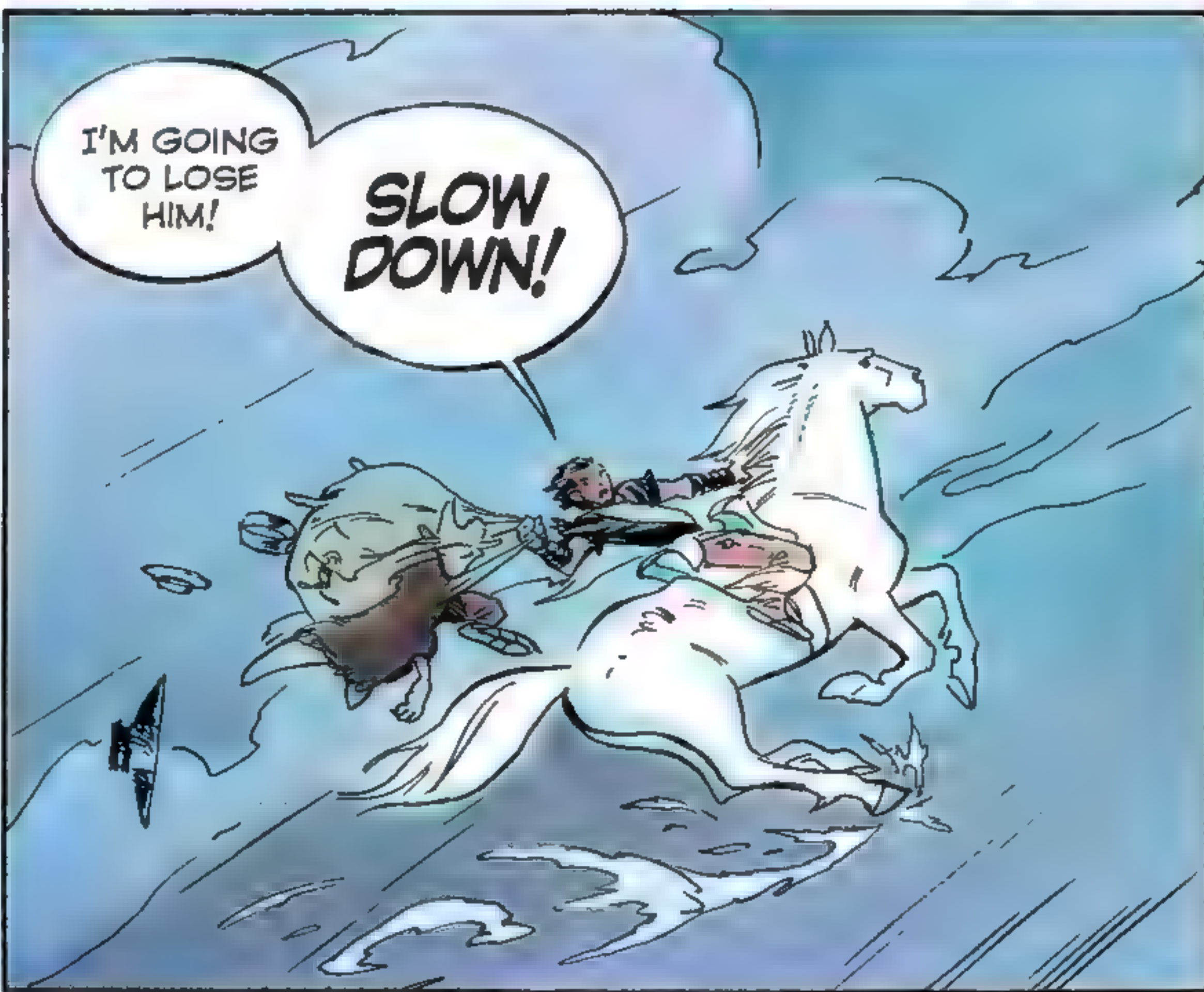
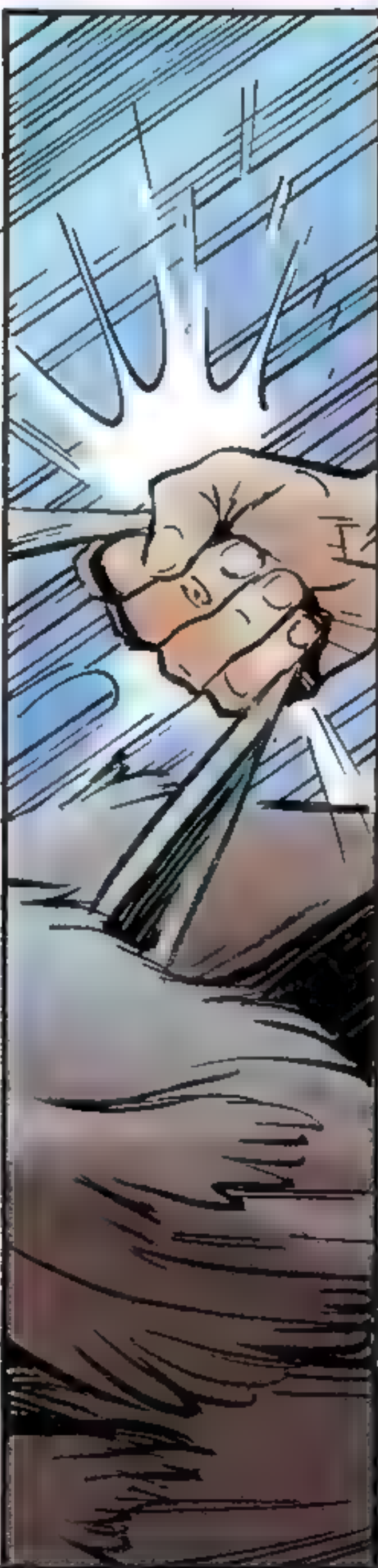
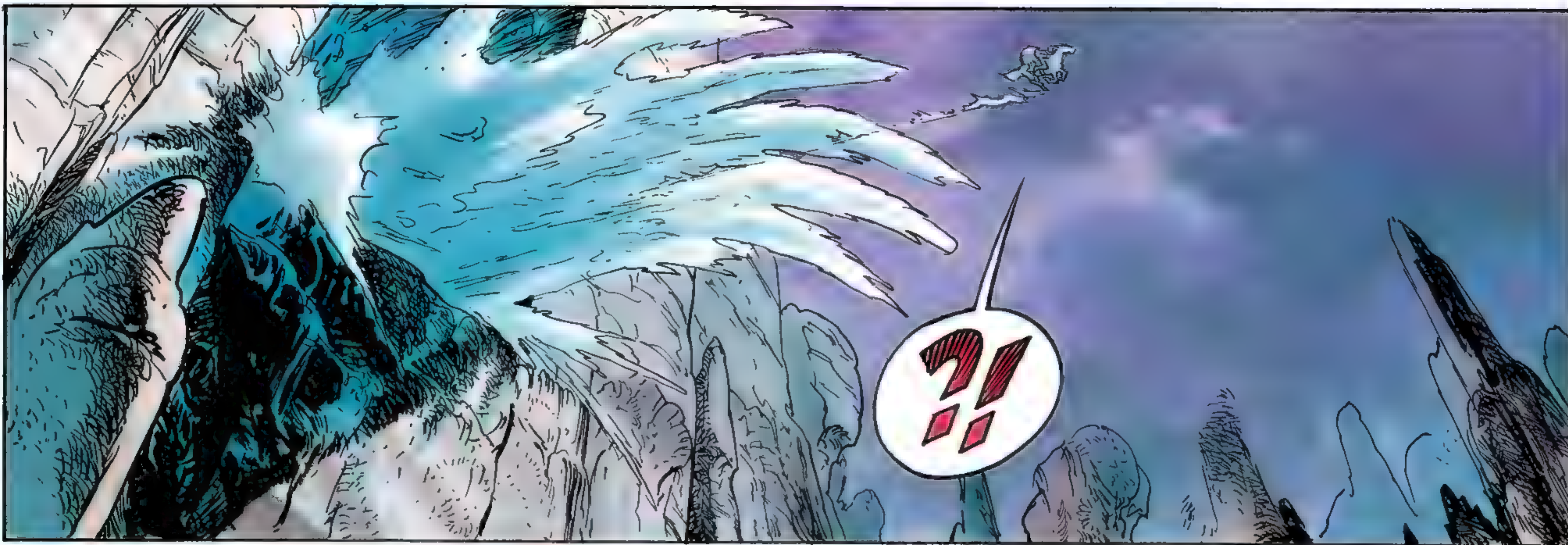
TOO
LATE!

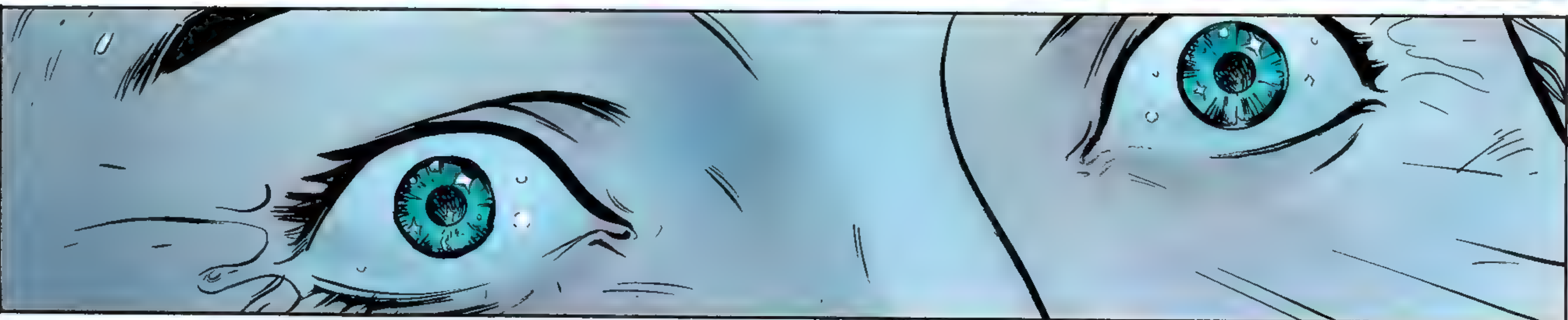
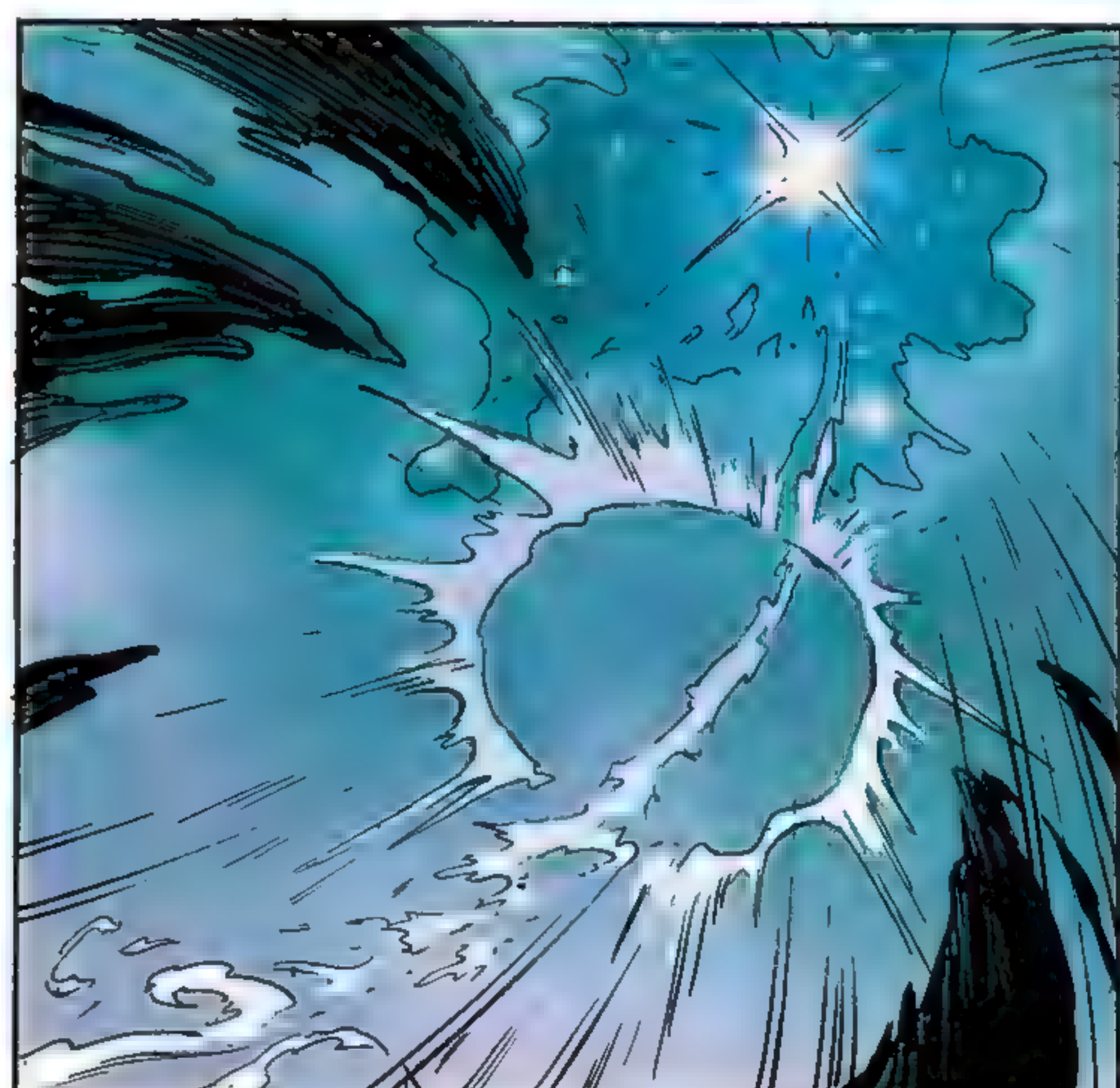


MIME?

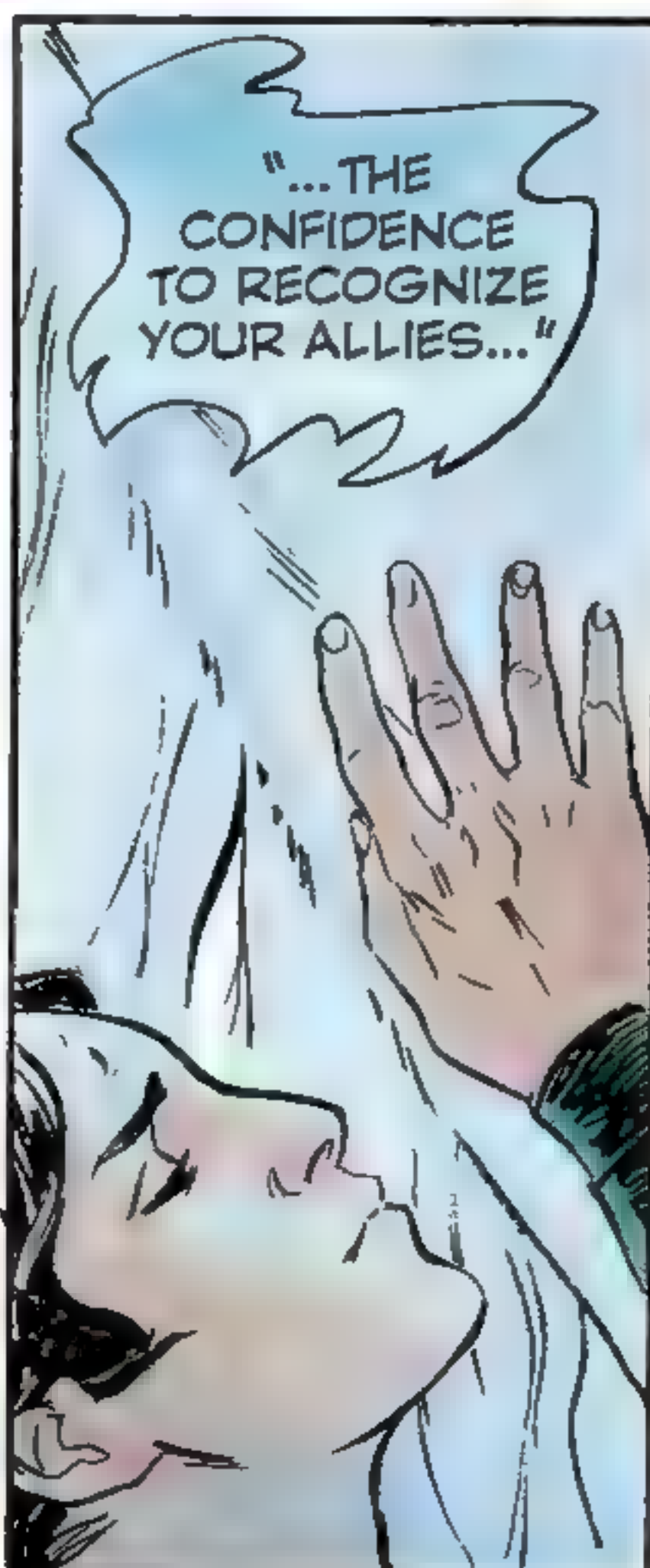
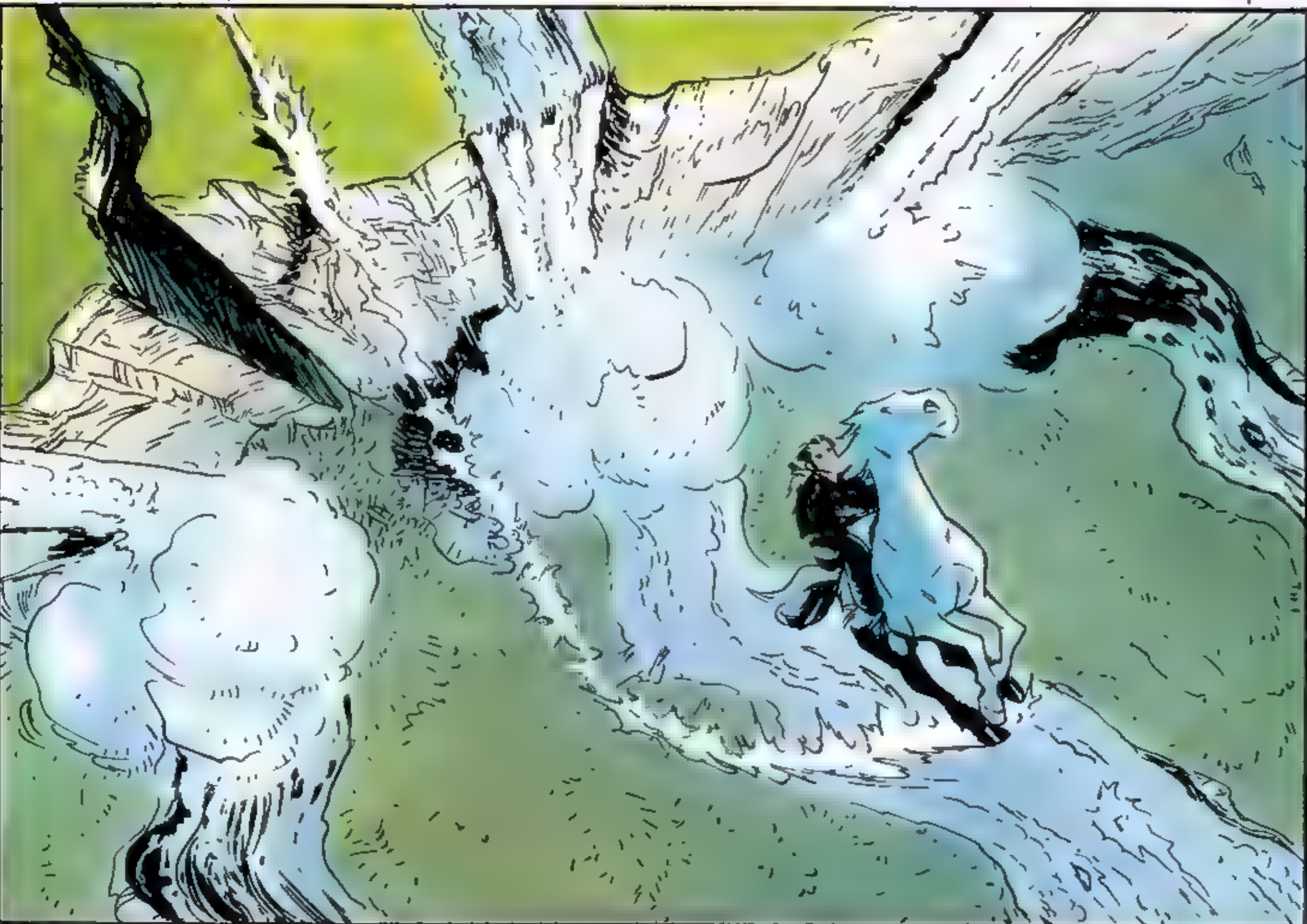
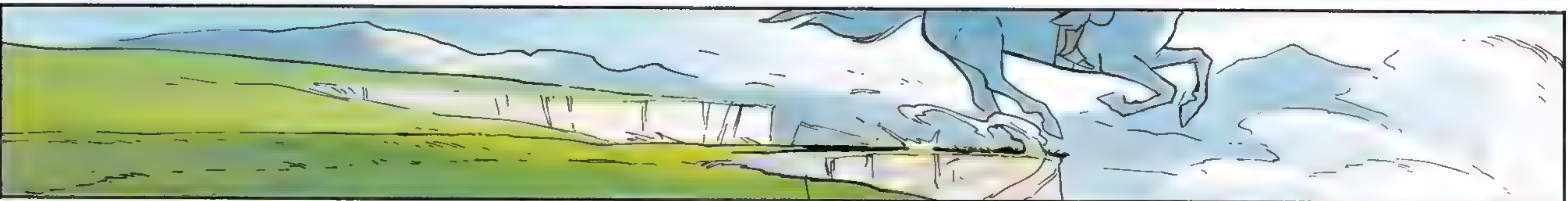
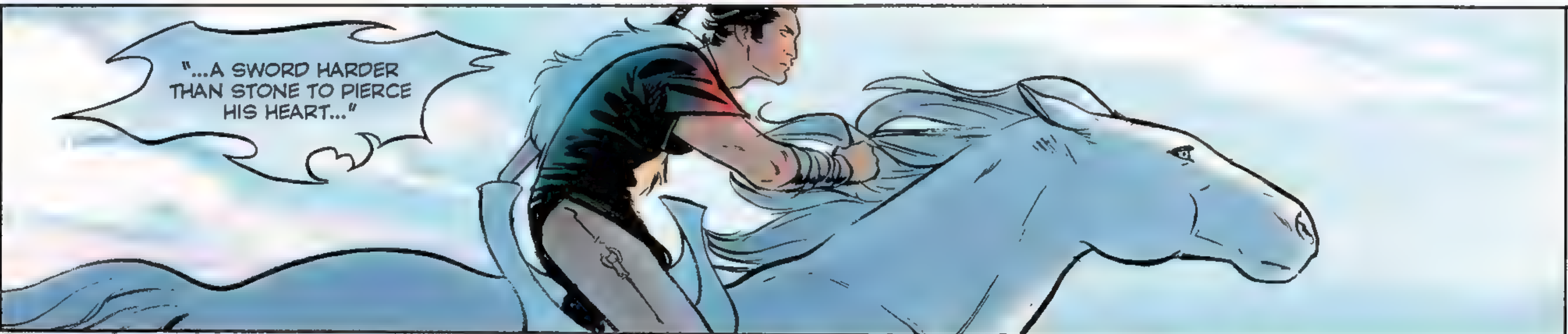
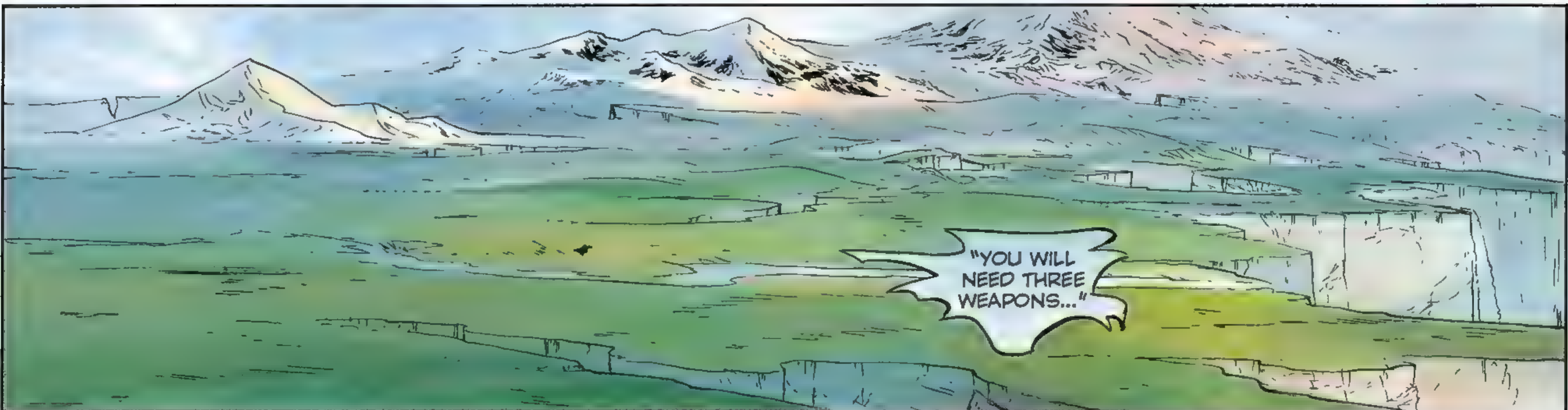
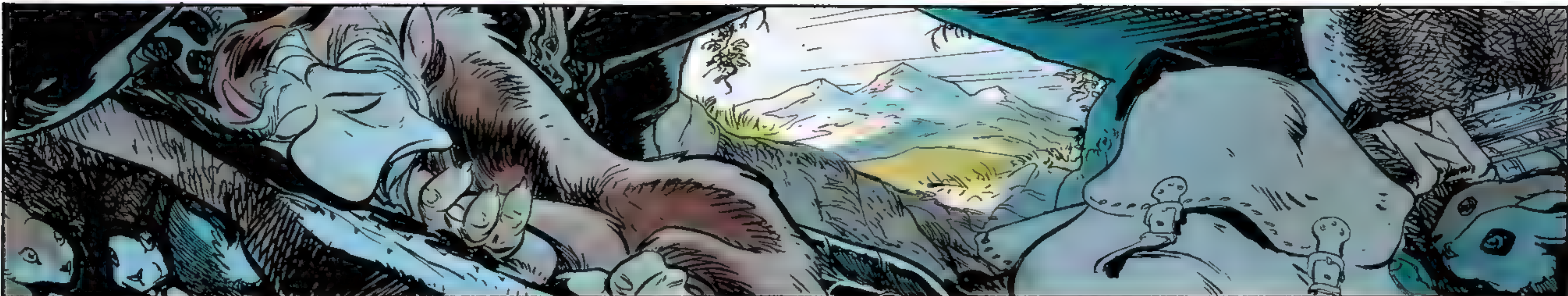
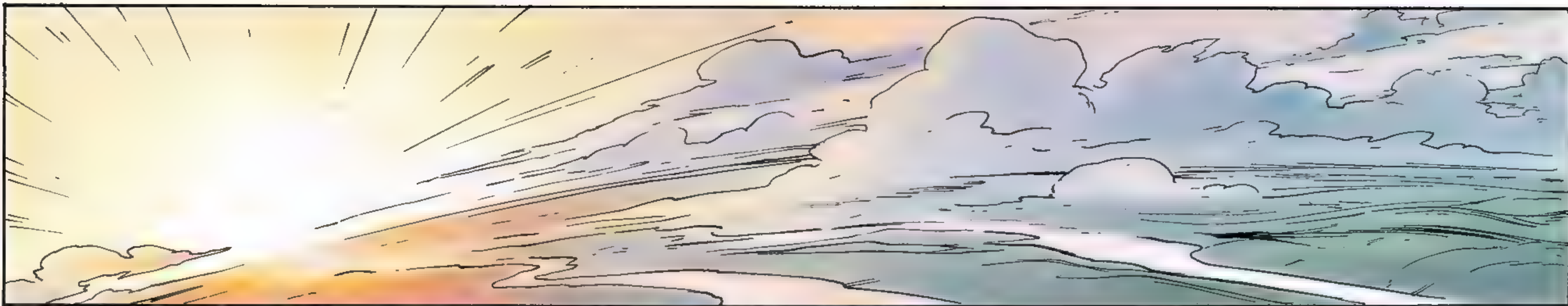


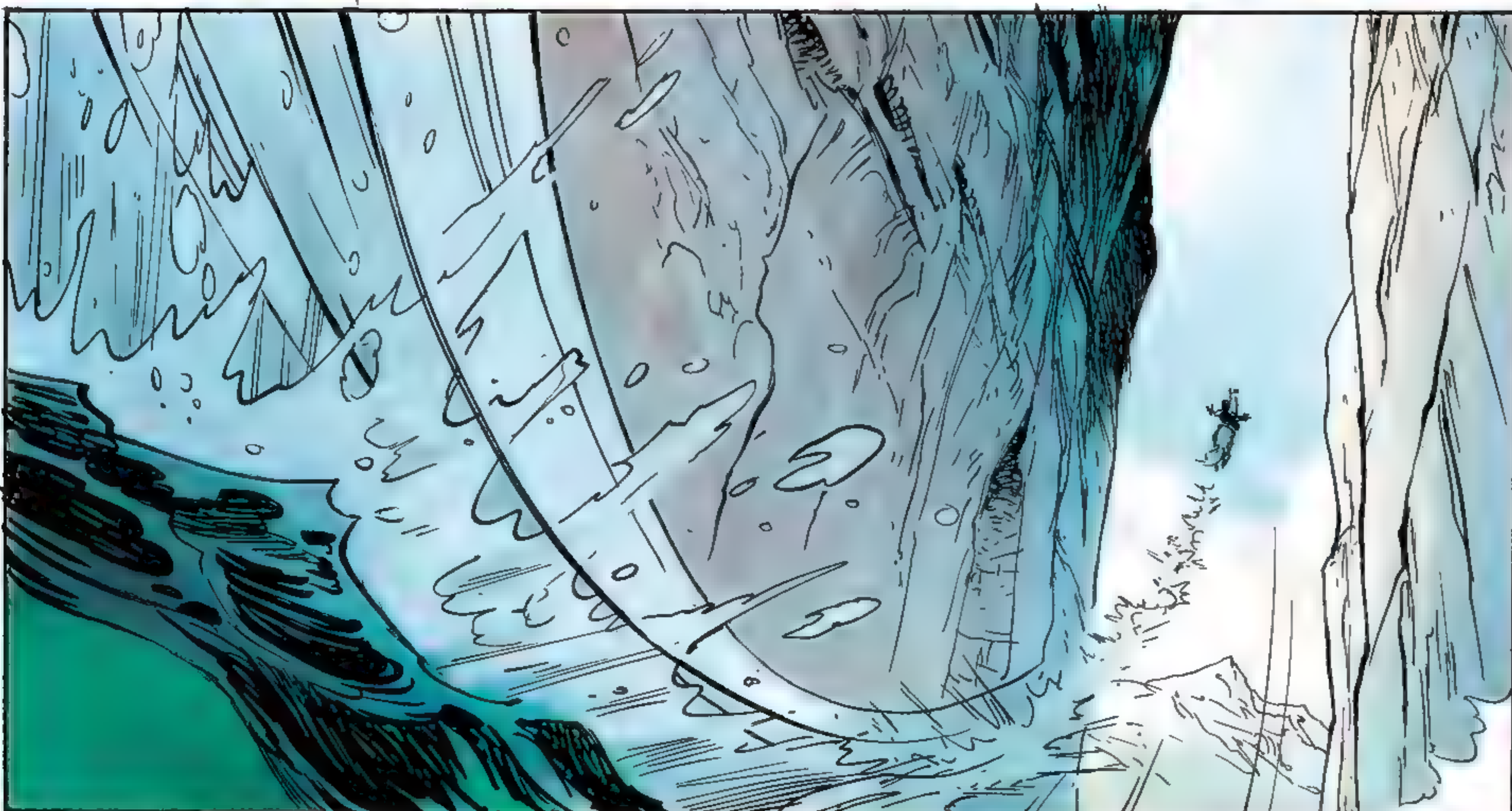
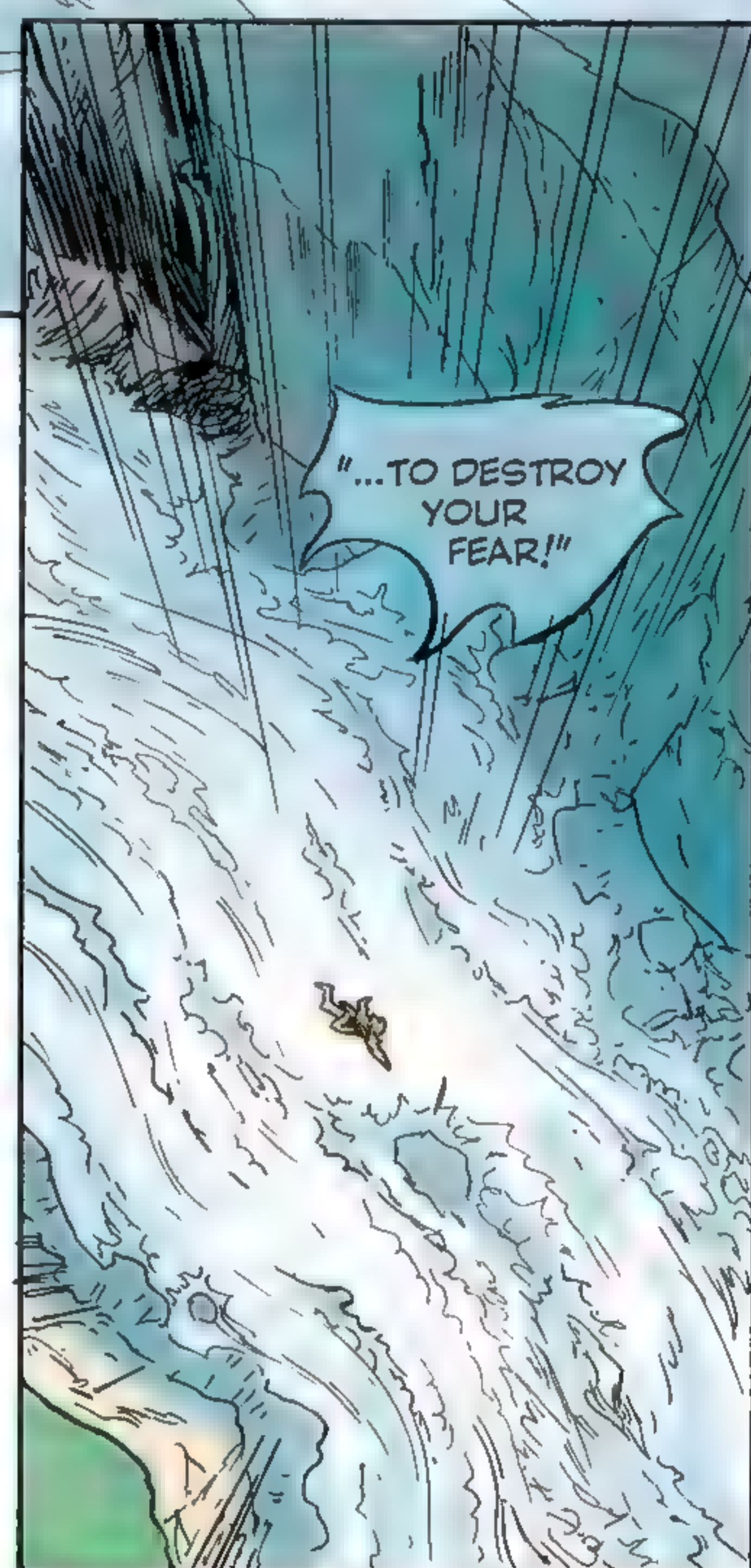
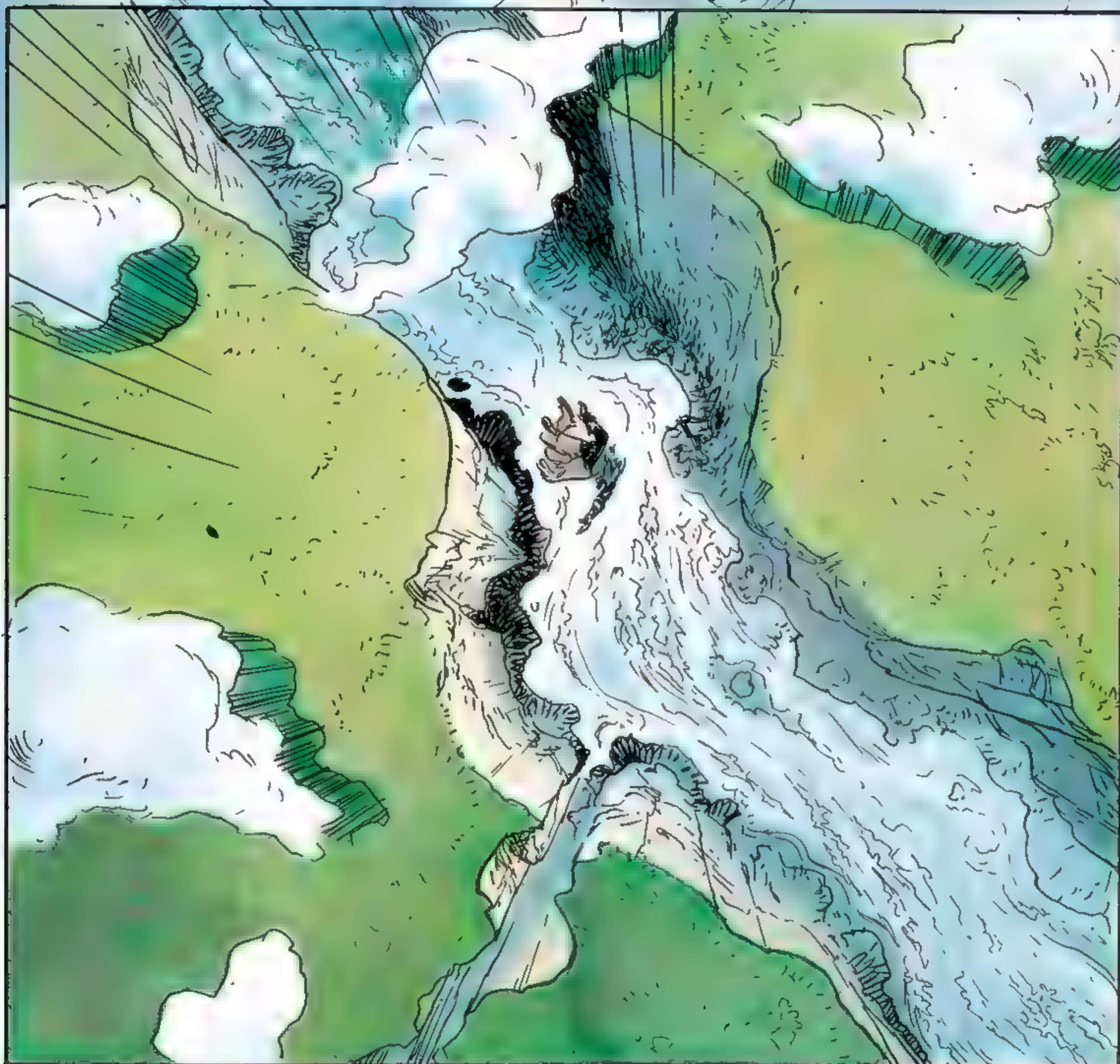
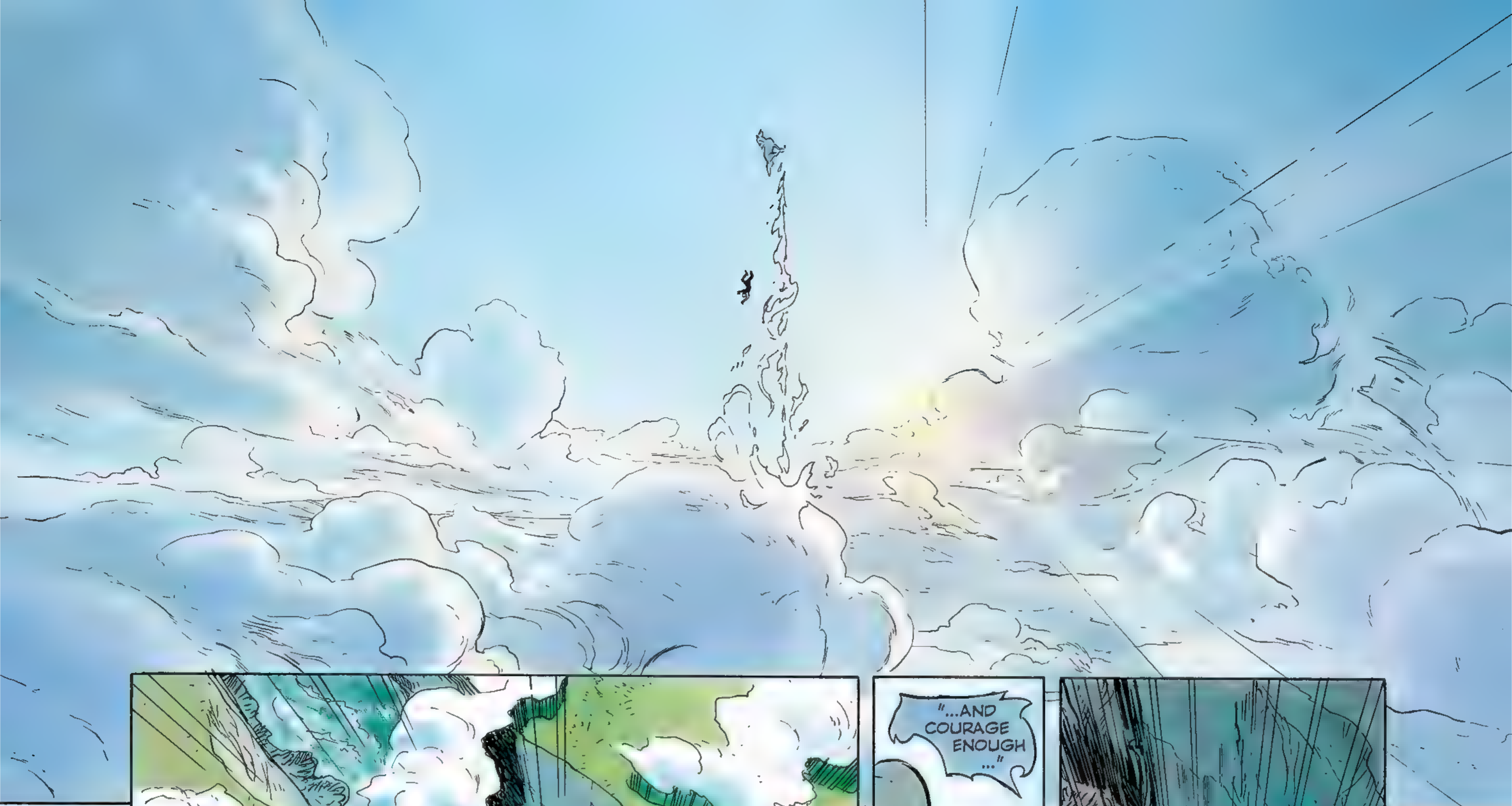
HANG ON.

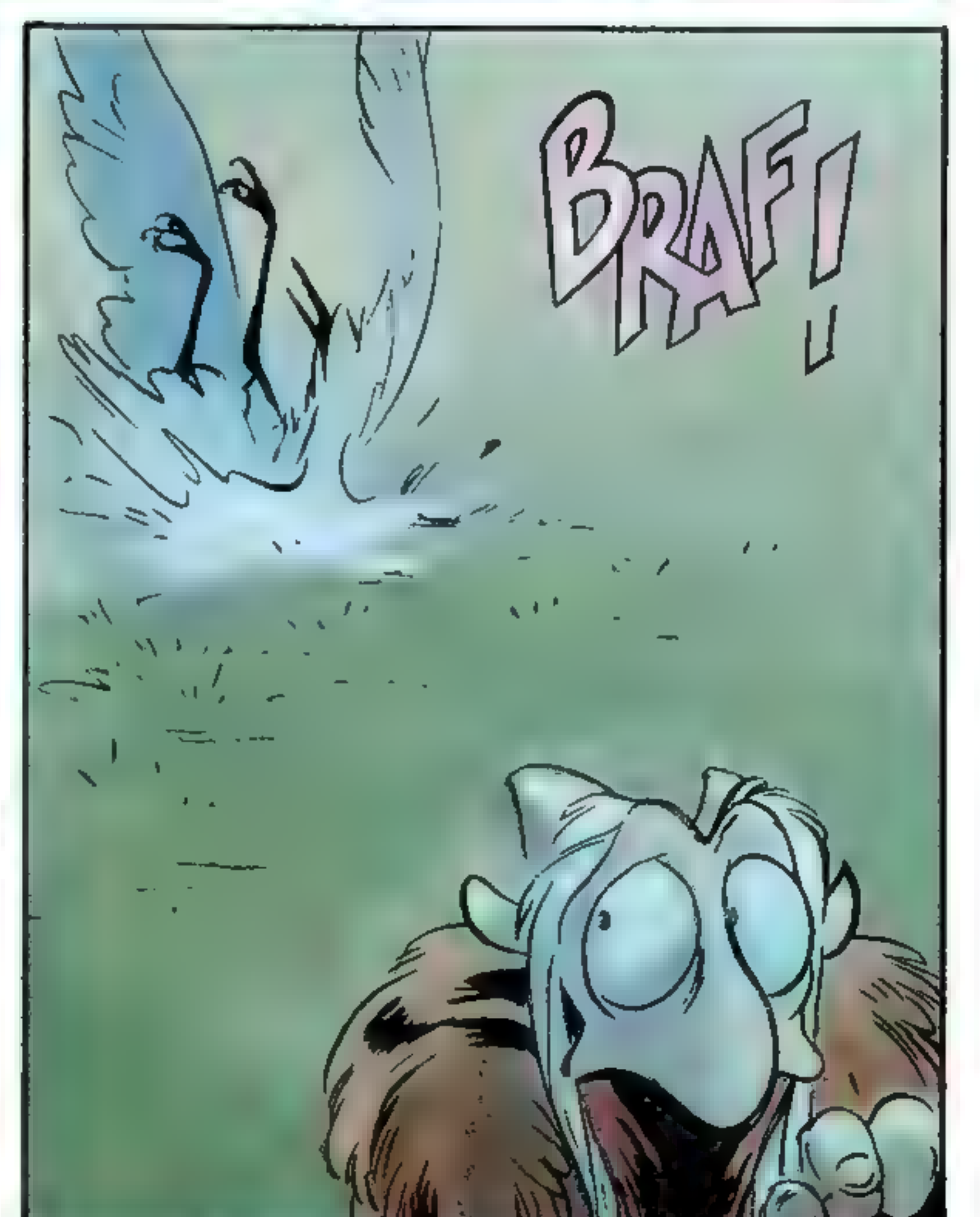
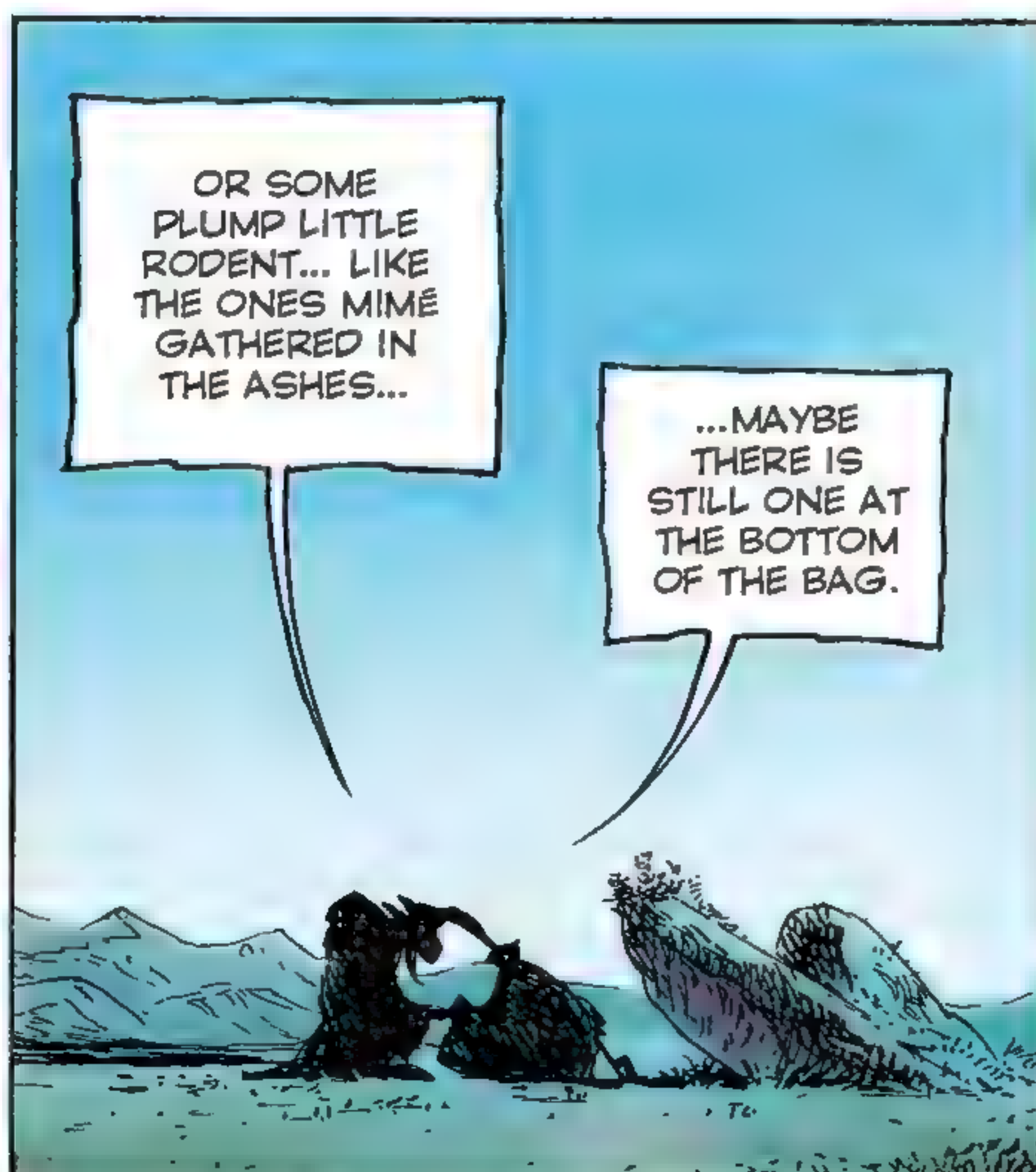
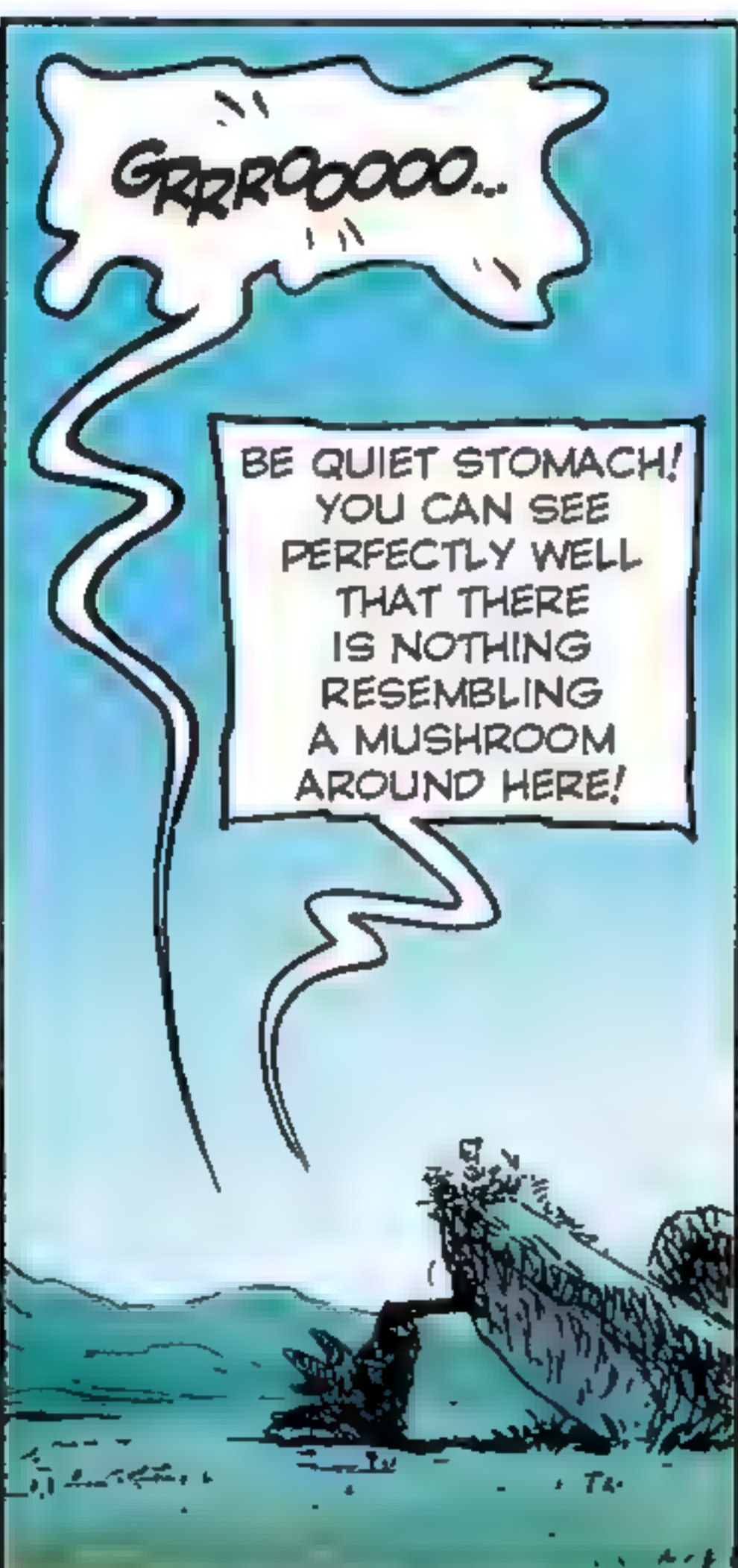
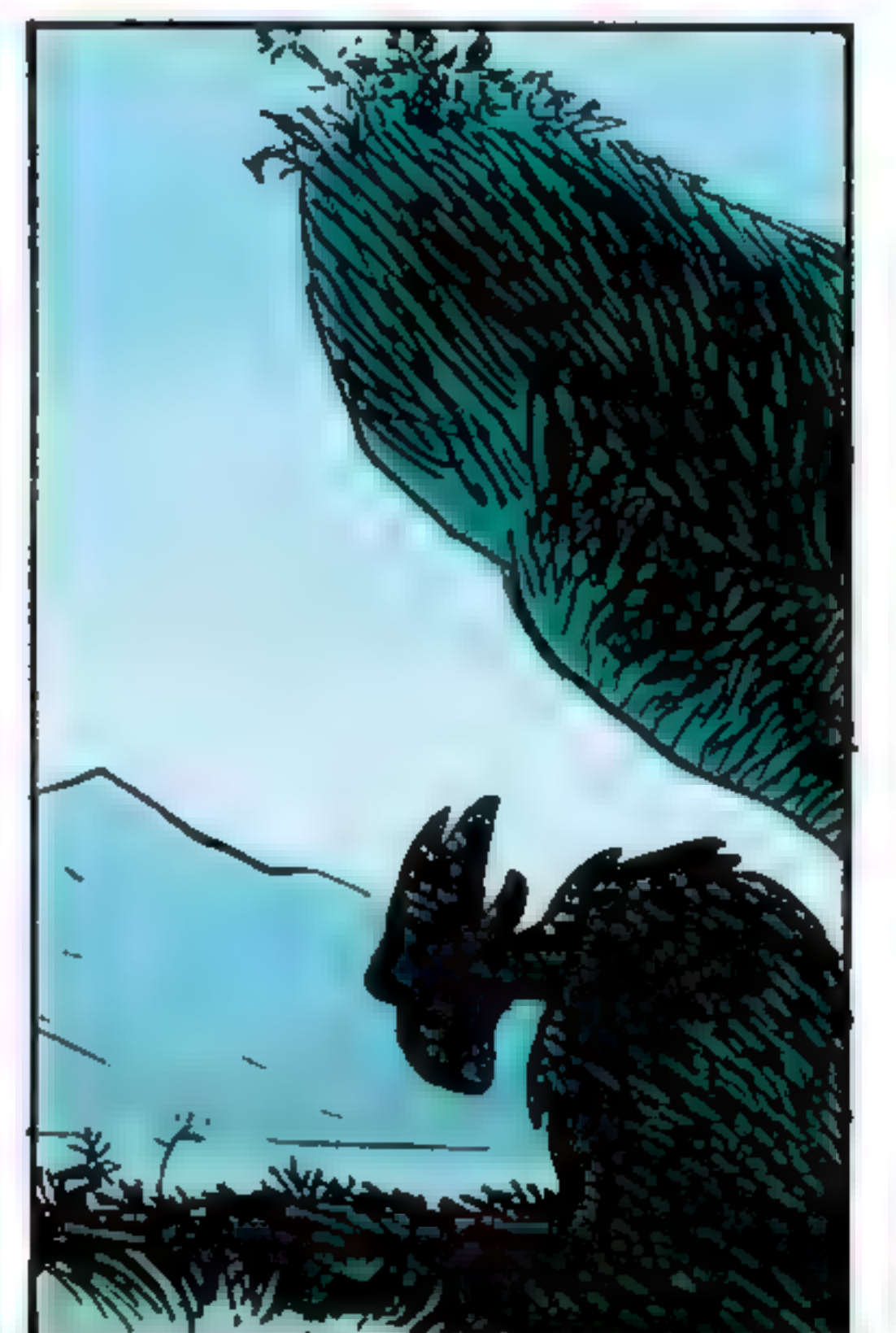
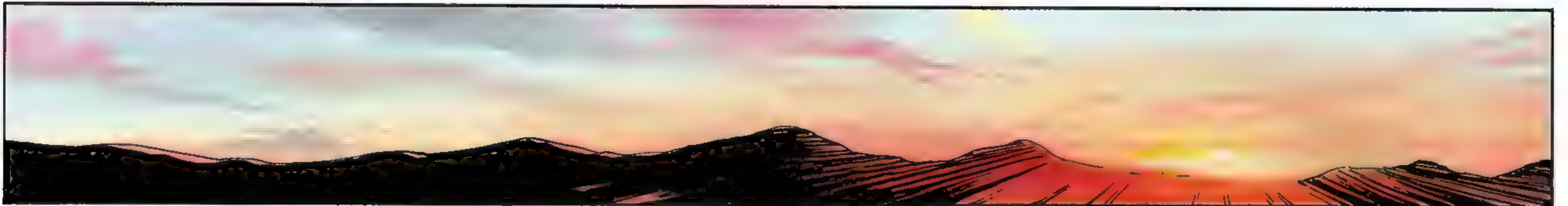
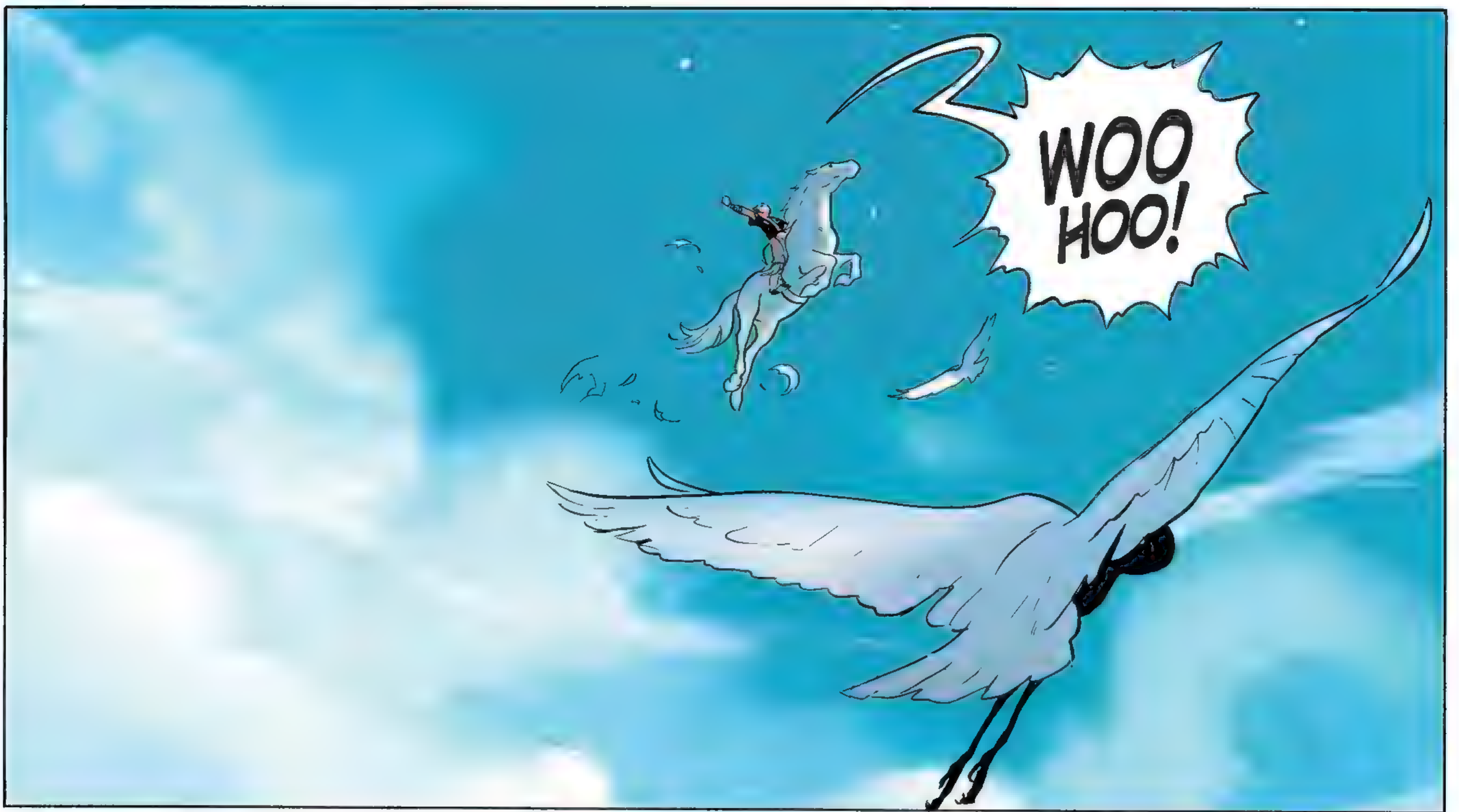




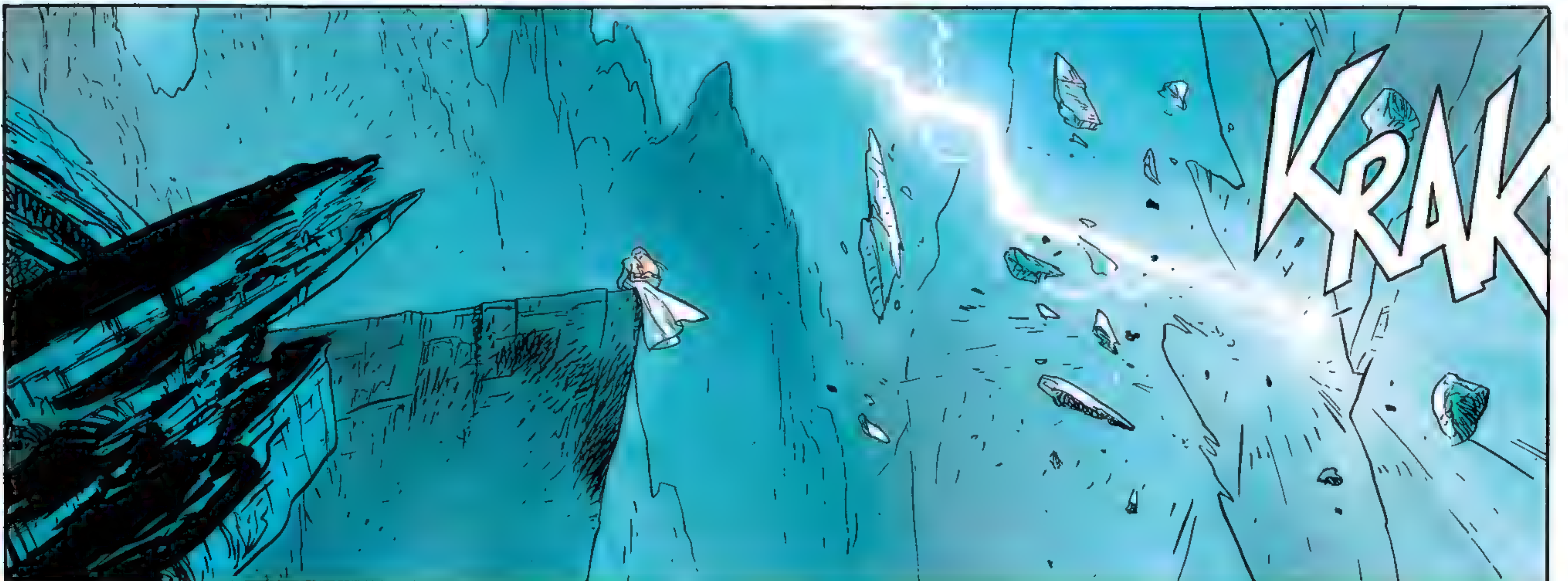
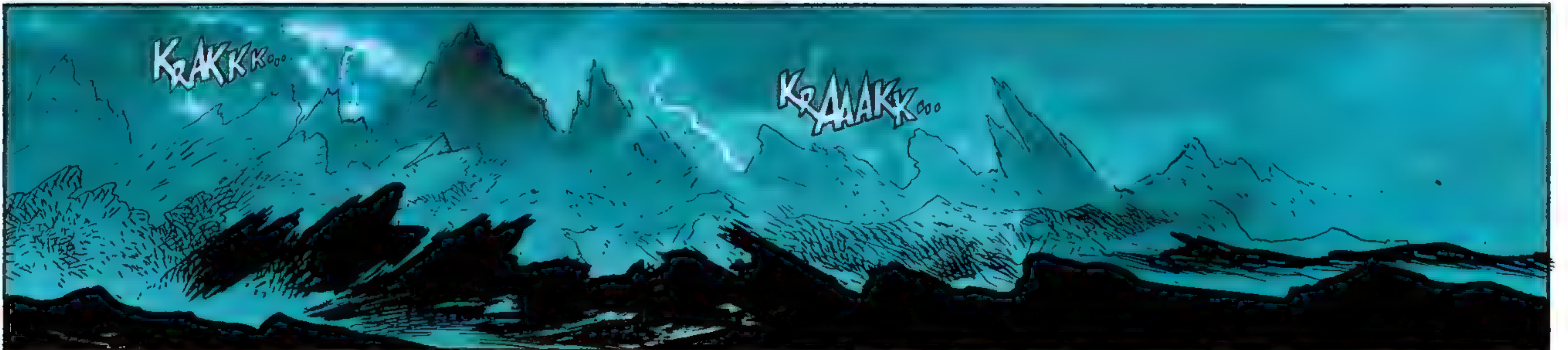
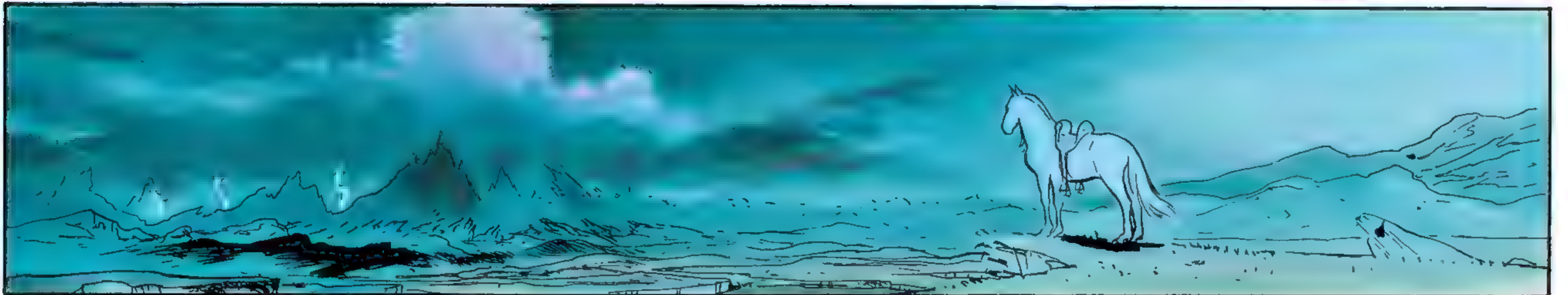
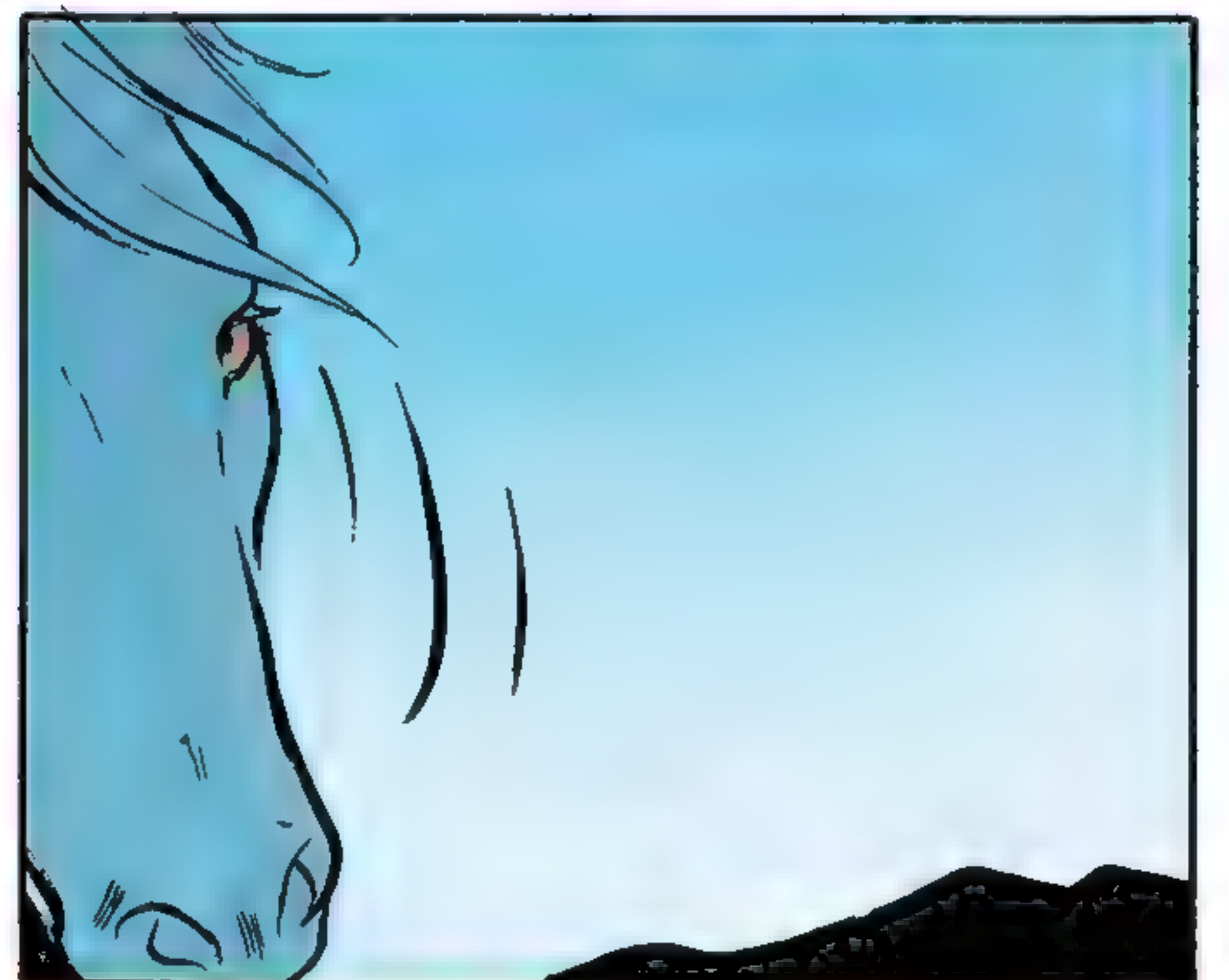
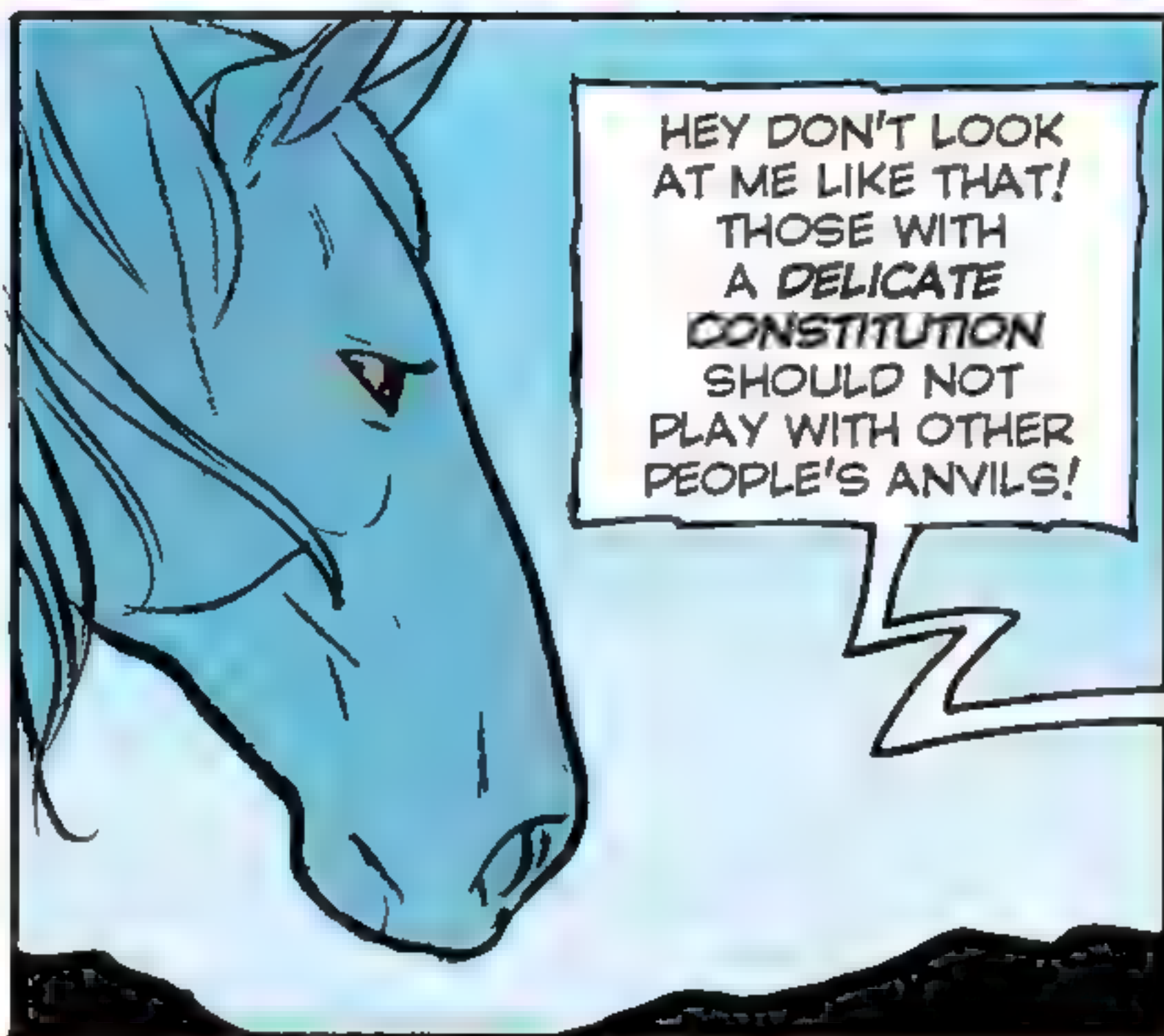
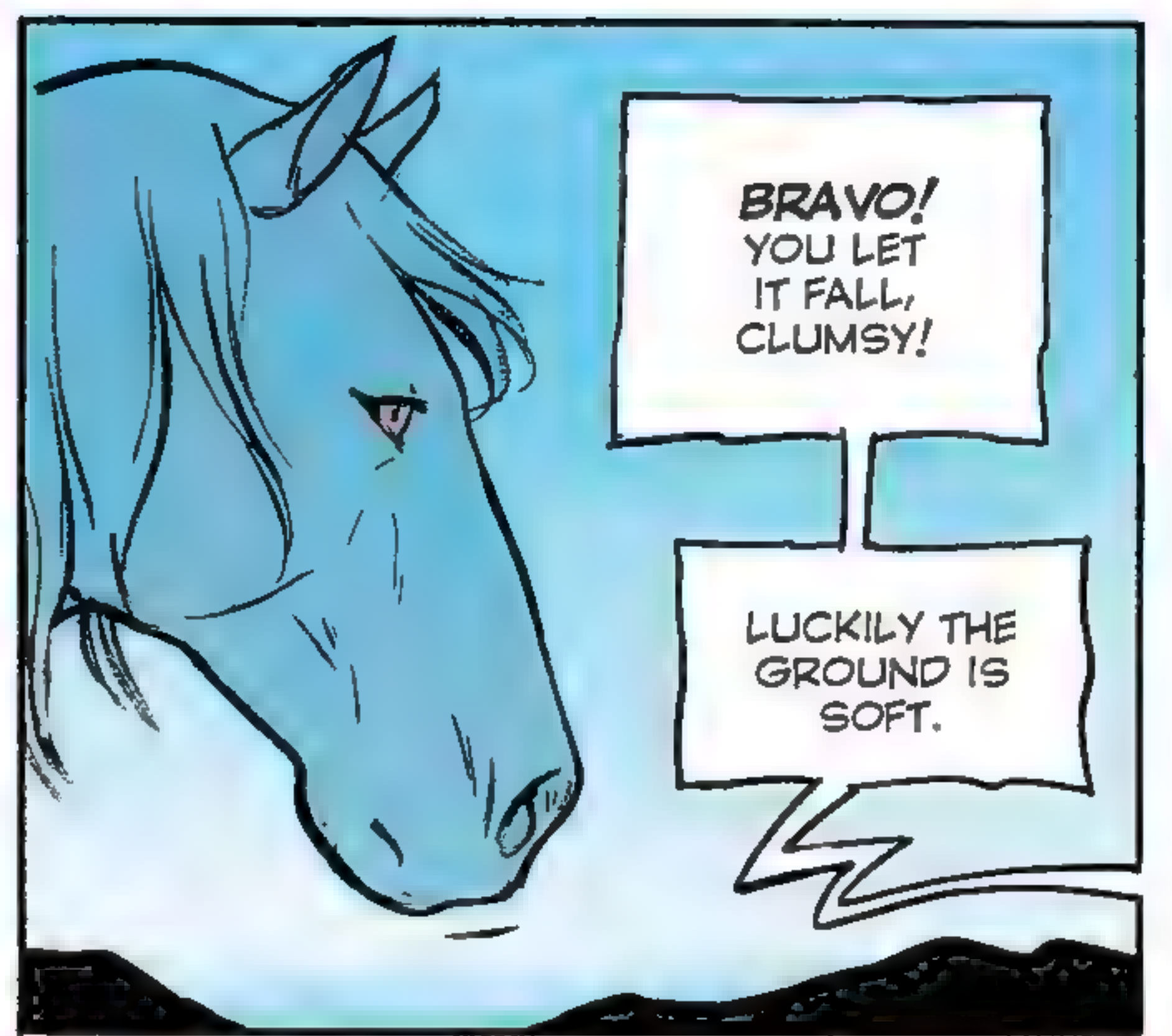
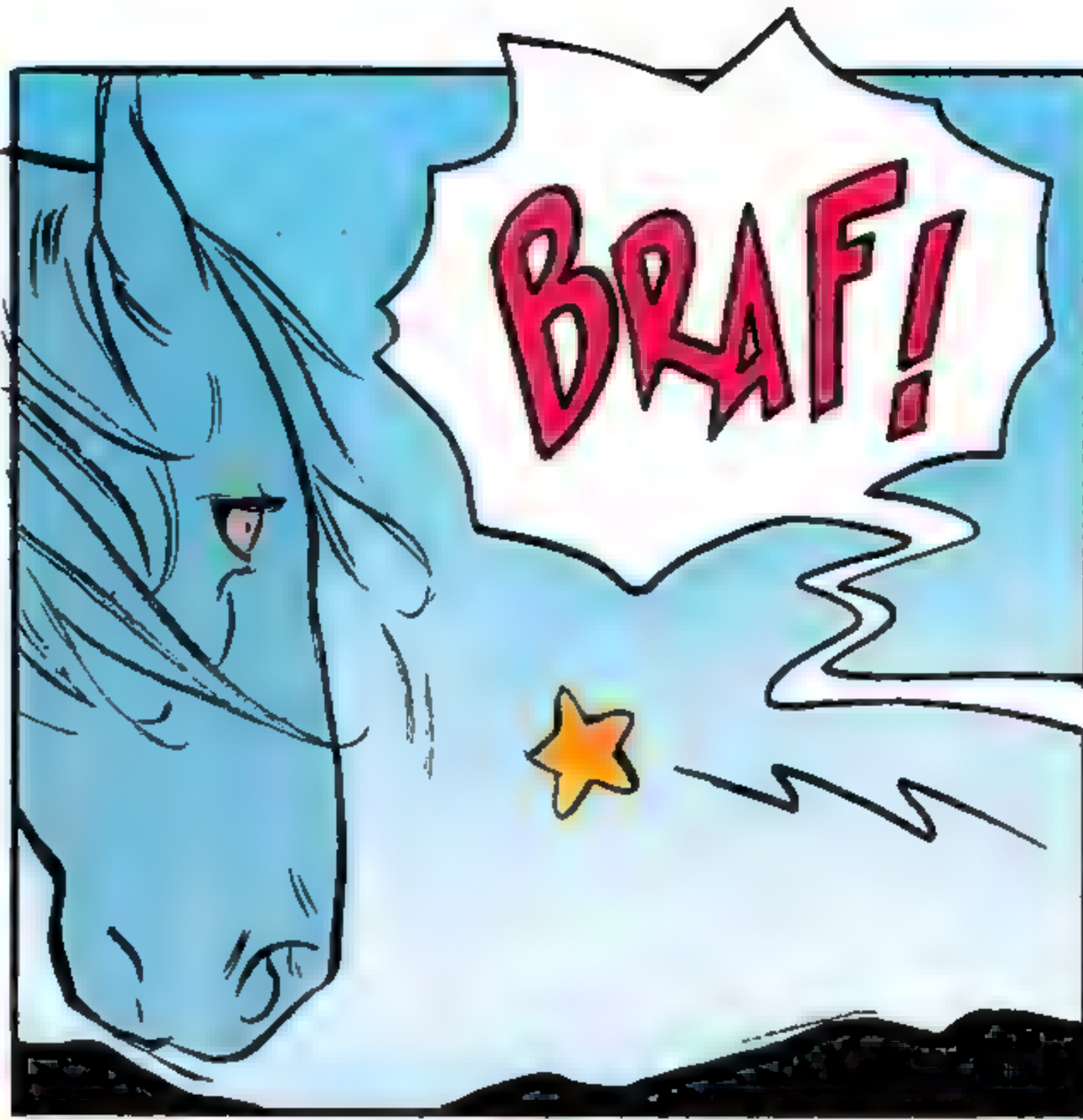


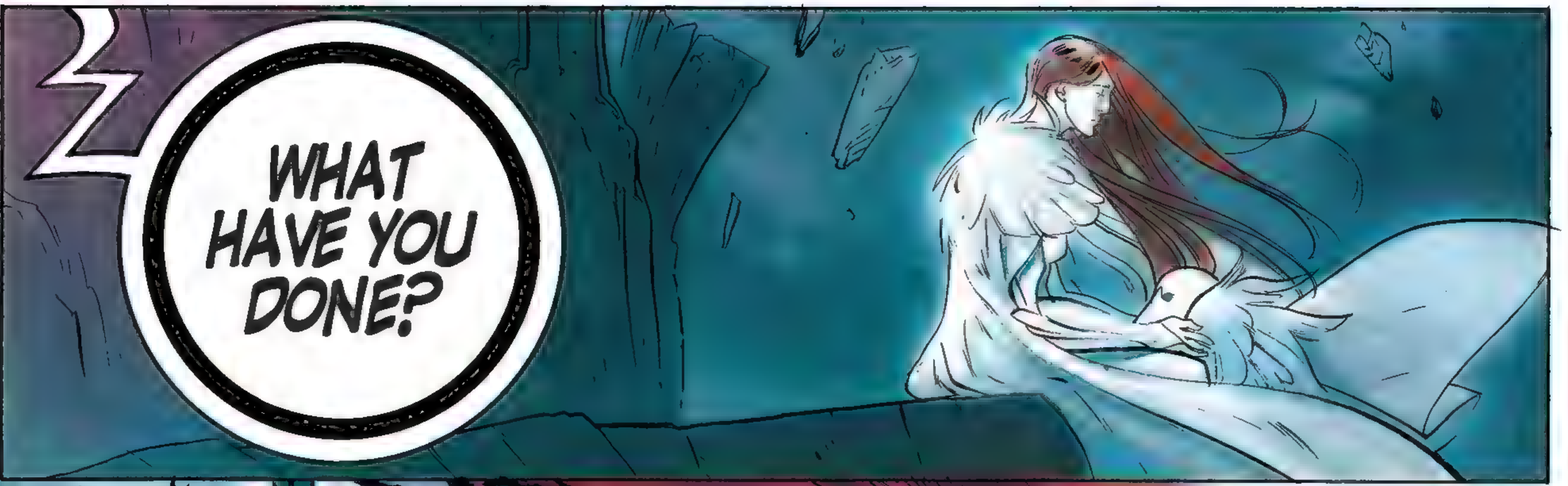












WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?



FATHER!
LISTEN TO
ME!

MADNESS!

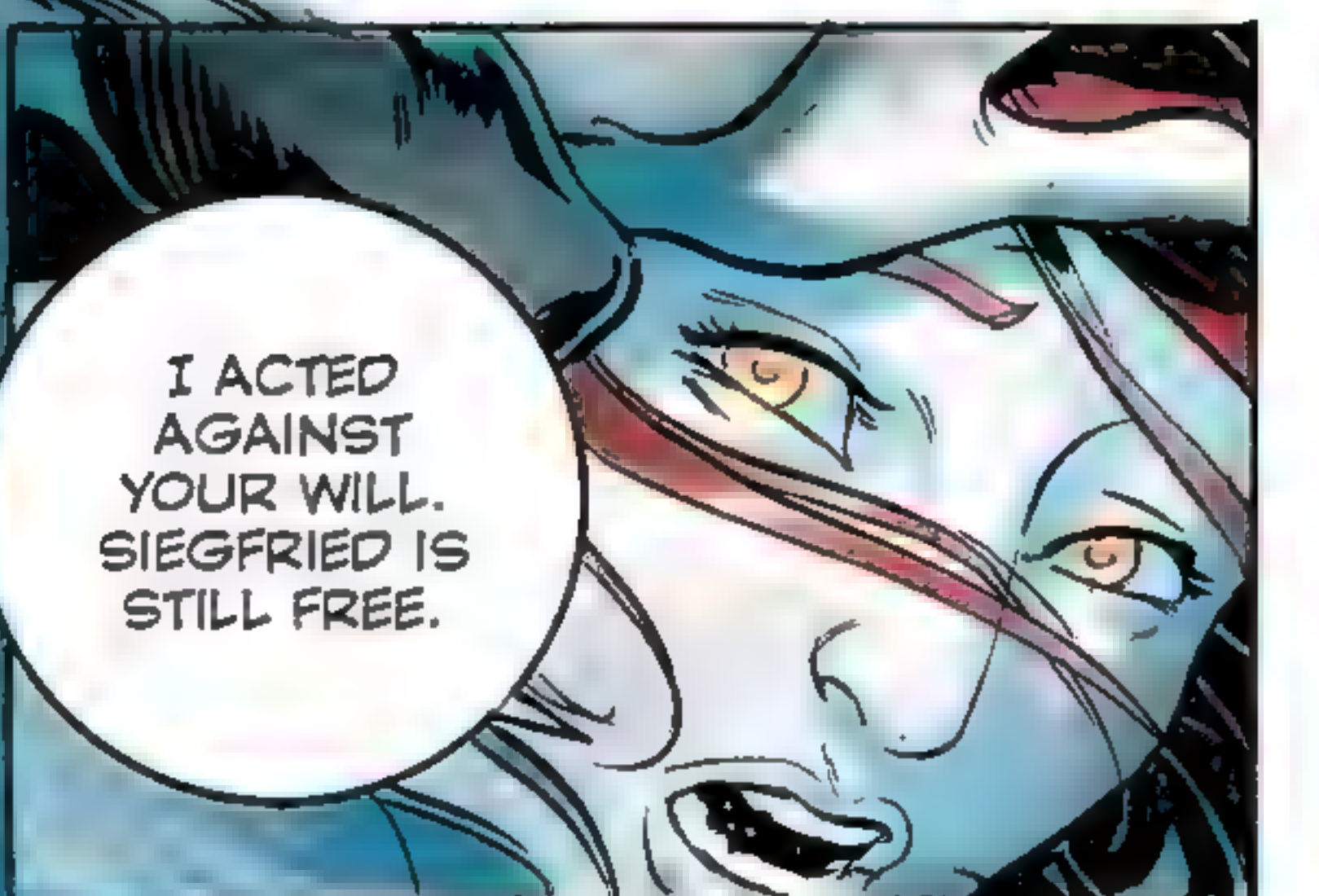


FAFNIR
CONQUERED THE POWER
OF GOLD ACCORDING TO
MY LAW! I CANNOT TAKE IT
AWAY FROM HIM! NO ONE
CAN! SIEGFRIED ALONE
IGNORED THE LAW OF THE
GODS. HE WAS THE ONLY
ONE WHO WAS FREE
TO FIGHT THE
DRAGON!

...NOW AS
POWERLESS
AS I AM!

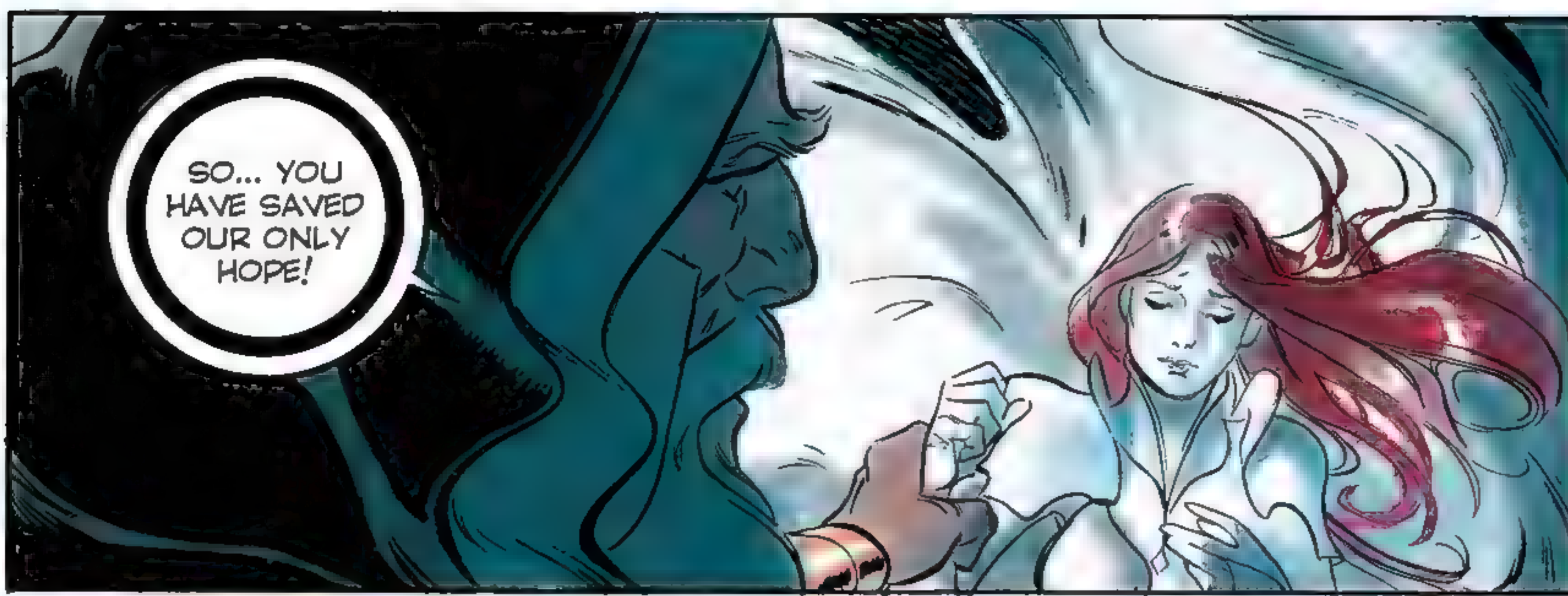
BY HELPING
HIM YOU
MADE HIM
MY TOOL...

NO
FATHER!

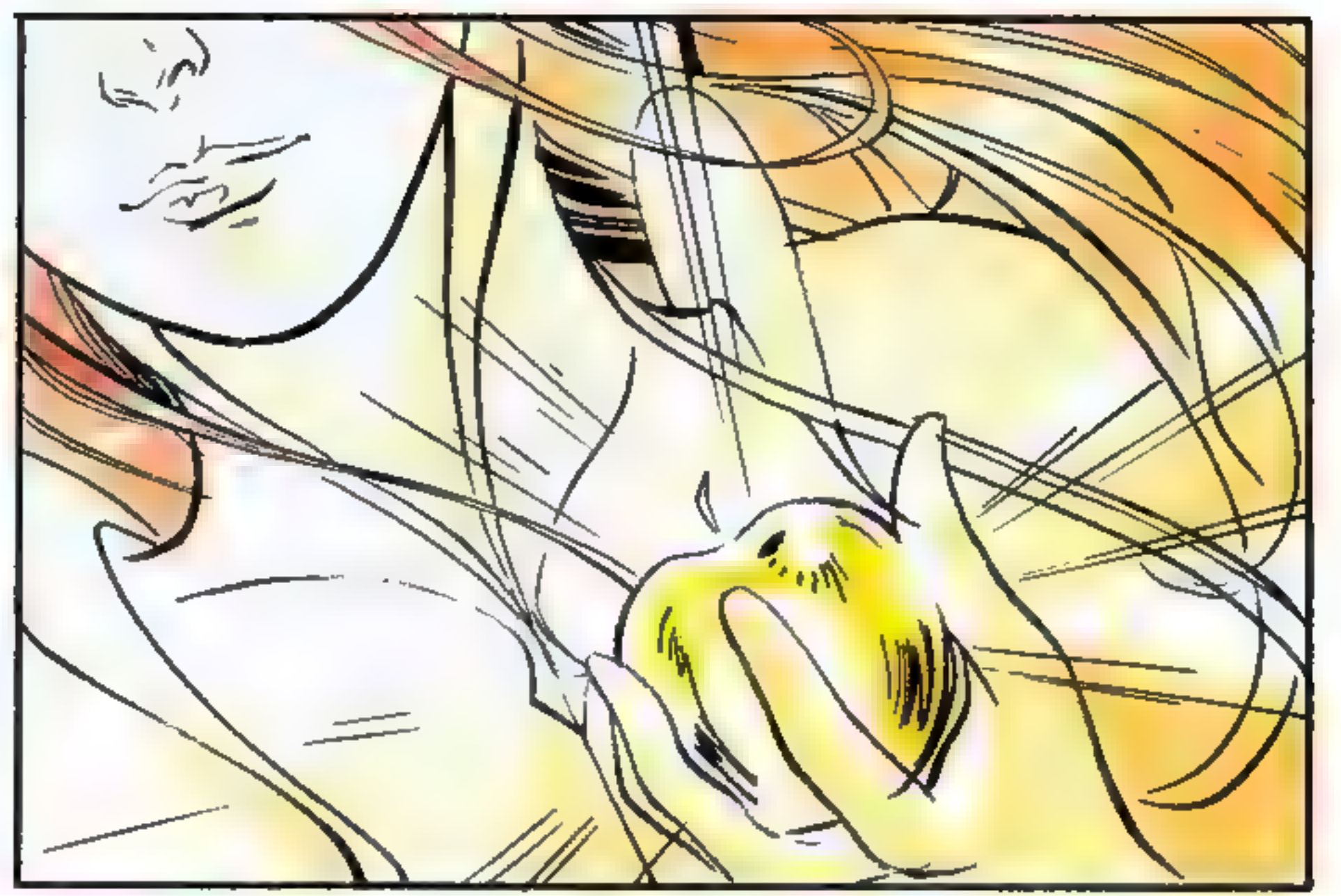


I ACTED
AGAINST
YOUR WILL.
SIEGFRIED IS
STILL FREE.





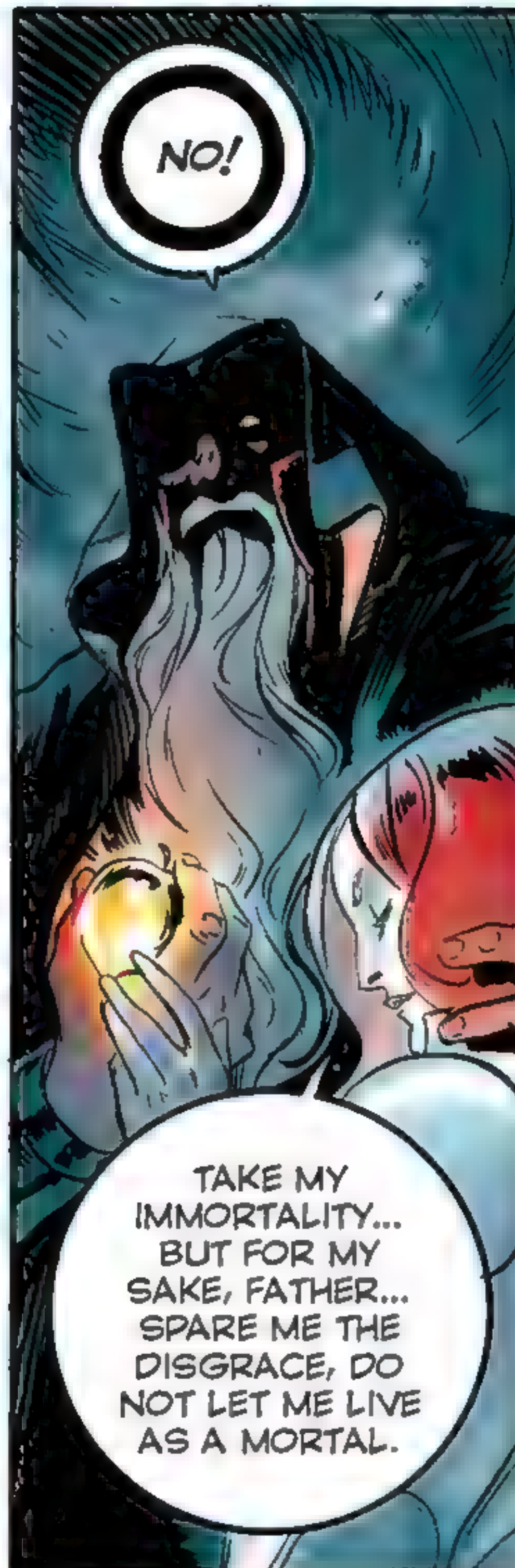
SO... YOU
HAVE SAVED
OUR ONLY
HOPE!



NO...

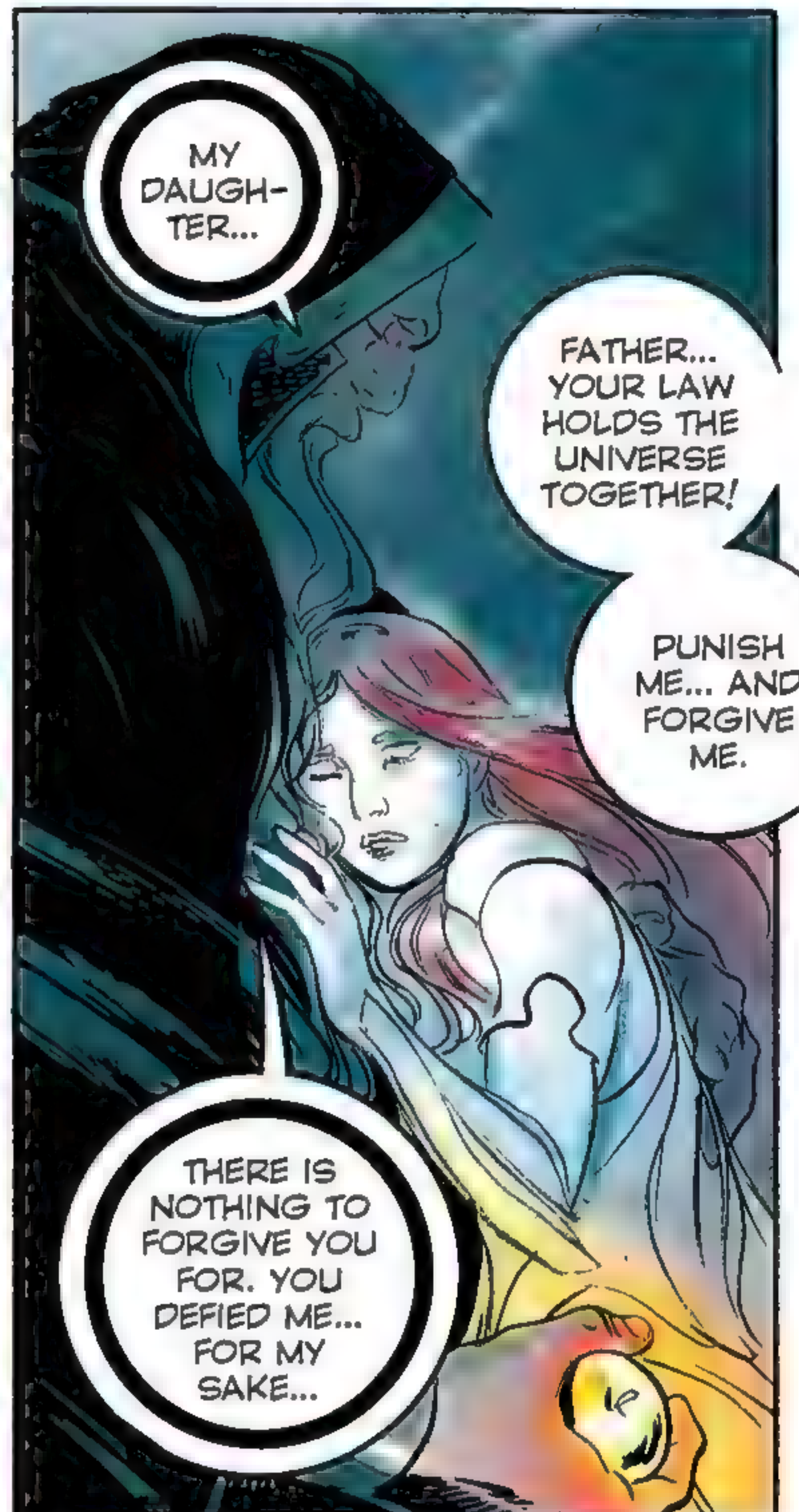
HOW
COULD I
PUNISH
YOU?

YOU MUST.
IF YOUR LAW
FALTERS THE
UNIVERSE WILL
COLLAPSE!



NO!

TAKE MY
IMMORTALITY...
BUT FOR MY
SAKE, FATHER...
SPARE ME THE
DISGRACE, DO
NOT LET ME LIVE
AS A MORTAL.

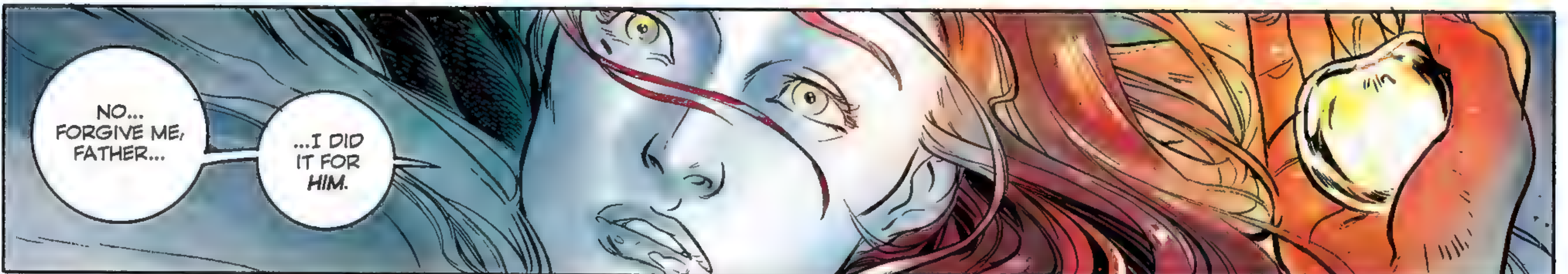


MY
DAUGH-
TER...

FATHER...
YOUR LAW
HOLDS THE
UNIVERSE
TOGETHER!

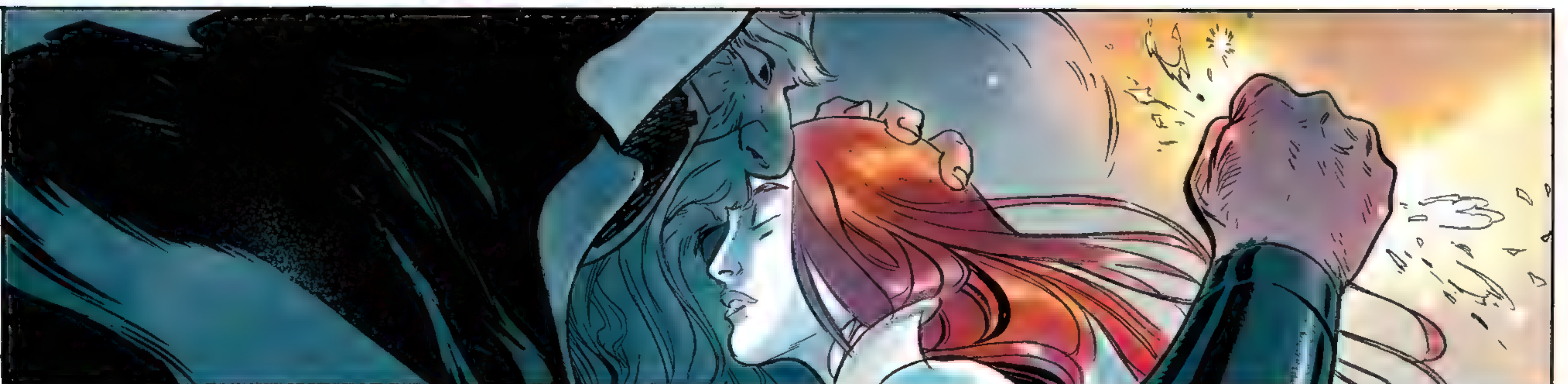
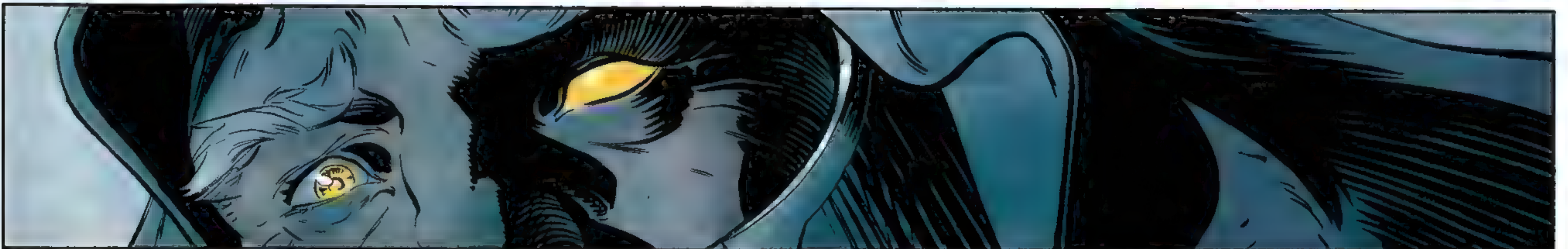
PUNISH
ME... AND
FORGIVE
ME.

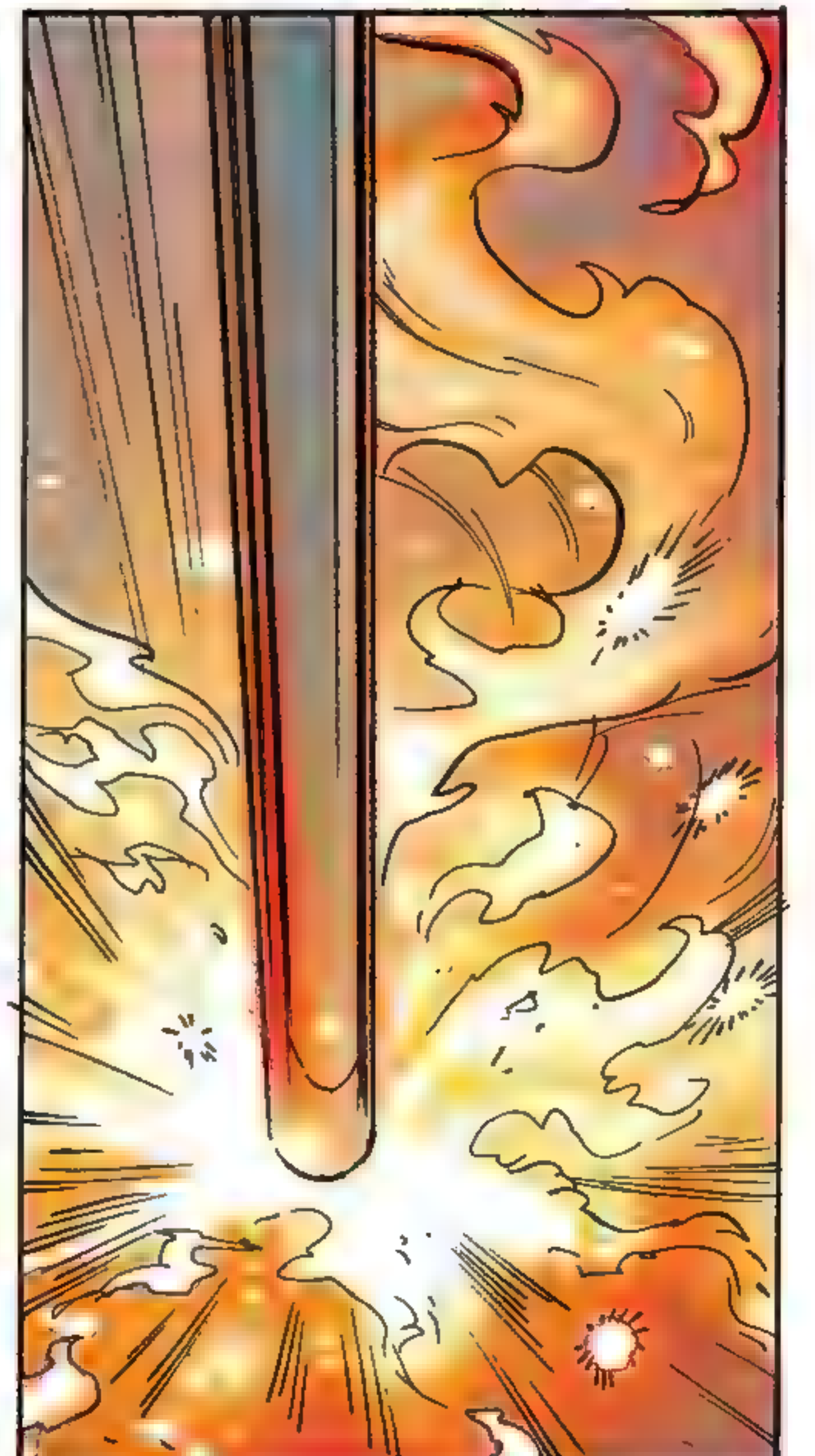
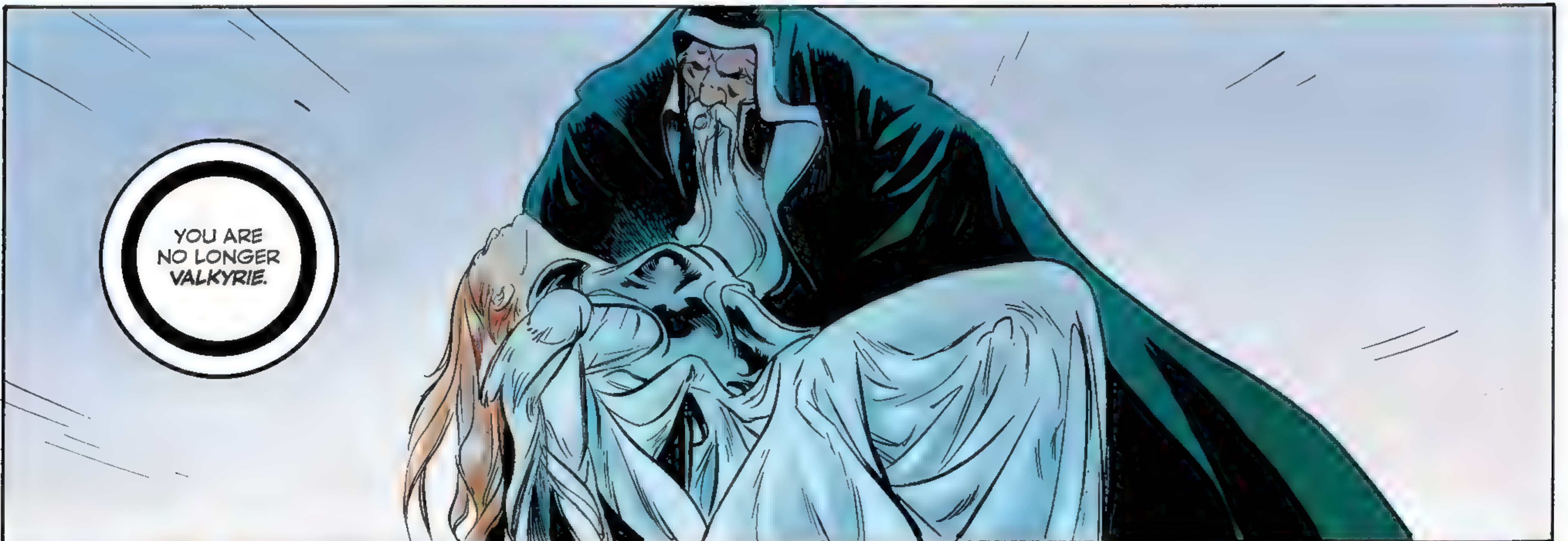
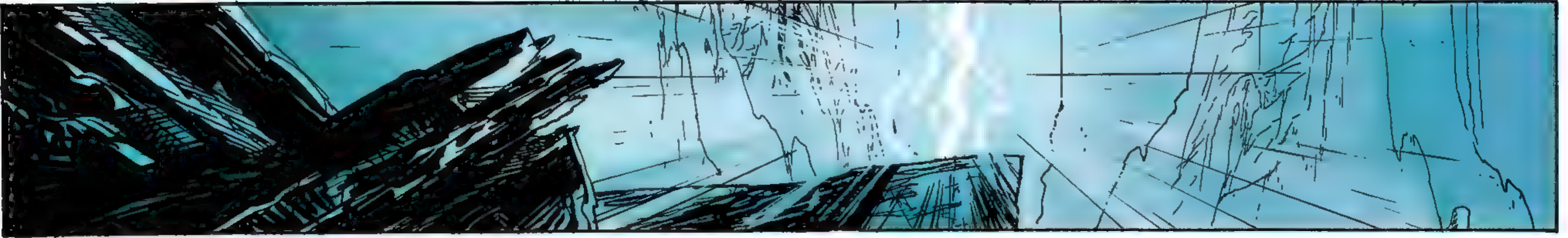
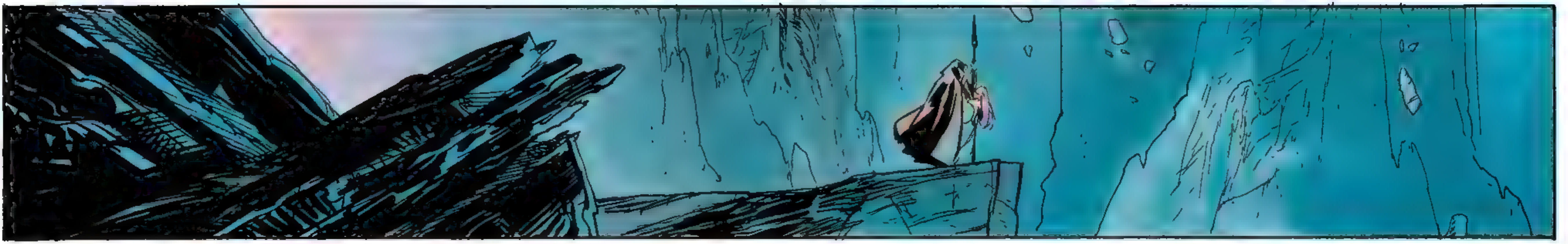
THERE IS
NOTHING TO
FORGIVE YOU
FOR. YOU
DEFIED ME...
FOR MY
SAKE...

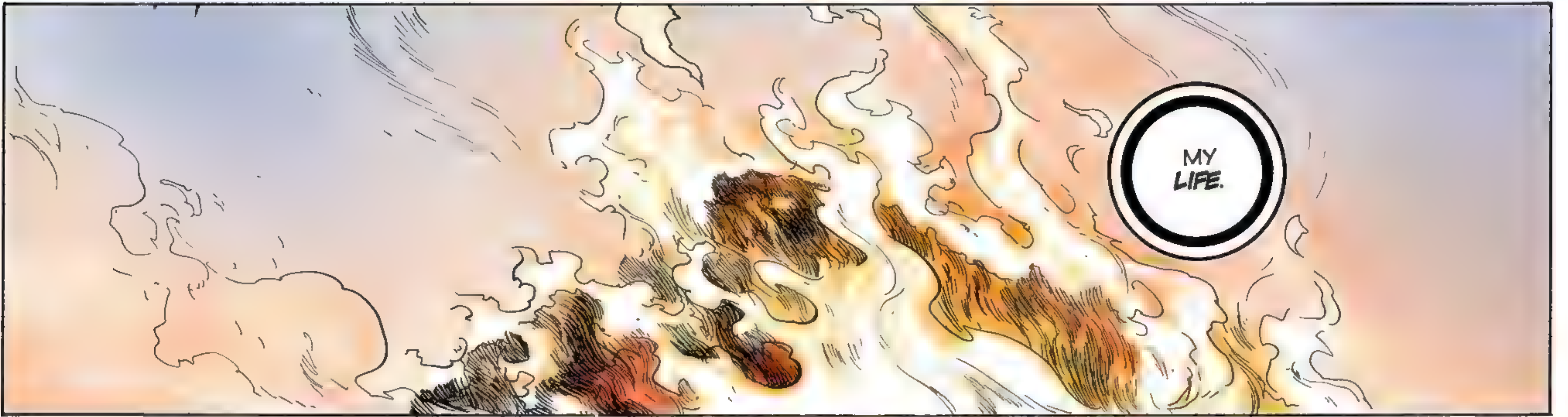
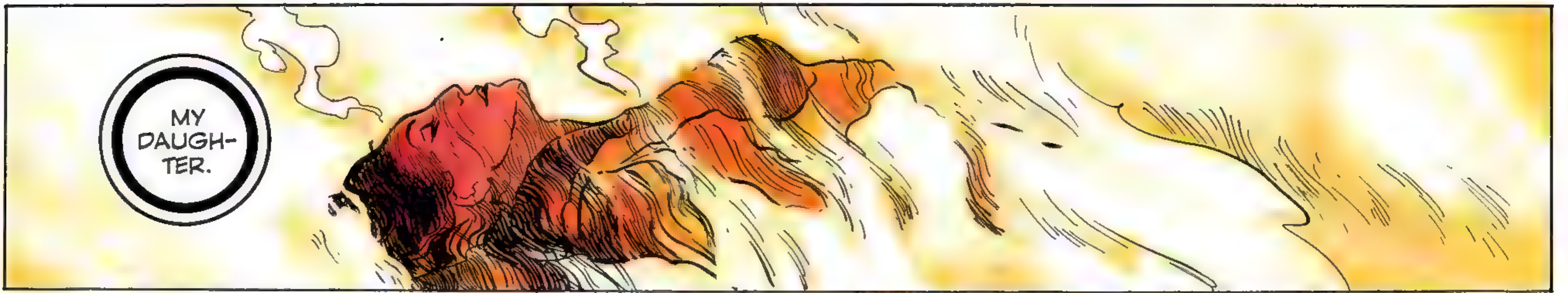


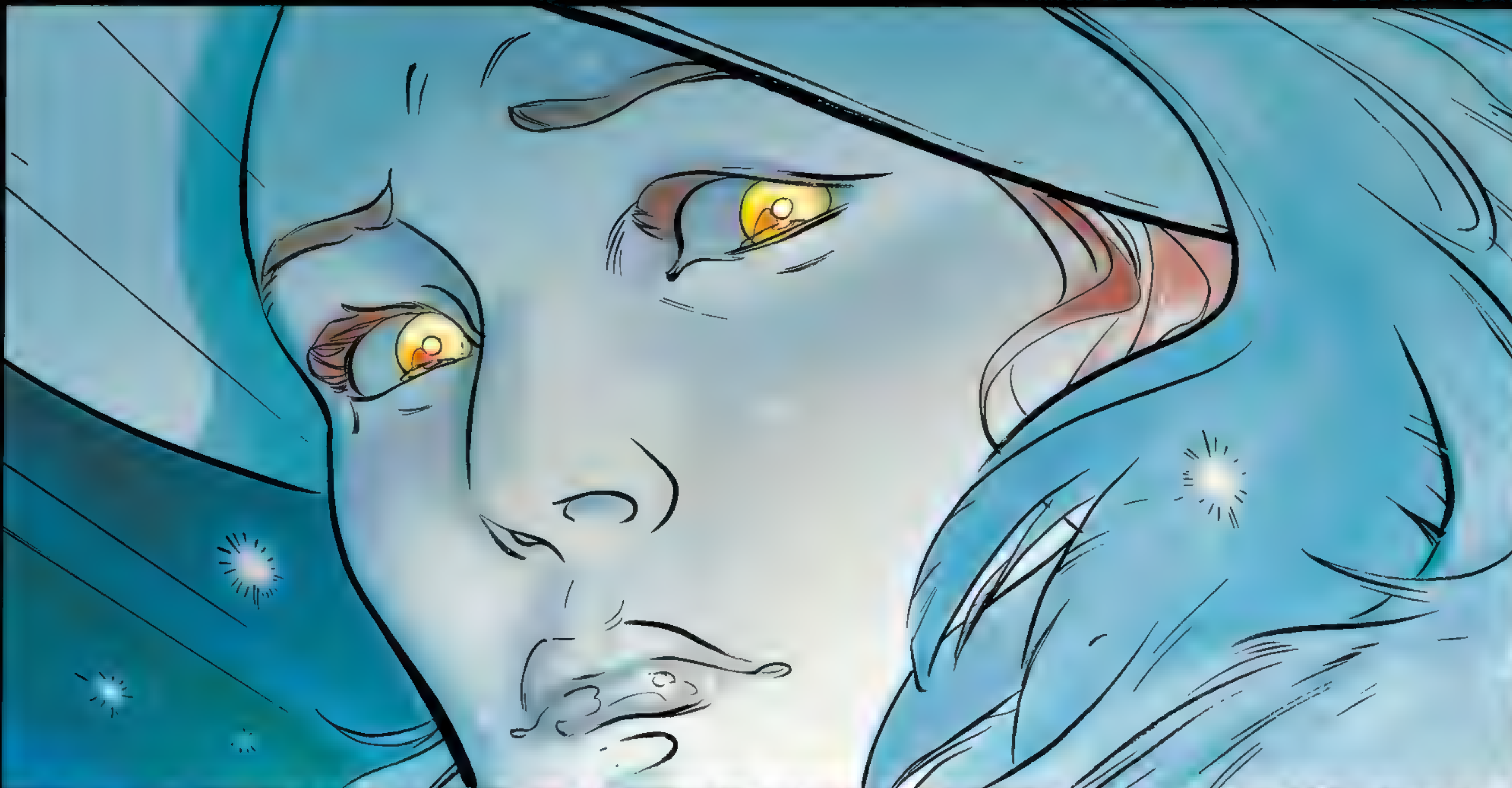
NO...
FORGIVE ME,
FATHER...

...I DID
IT FOR
HIM.





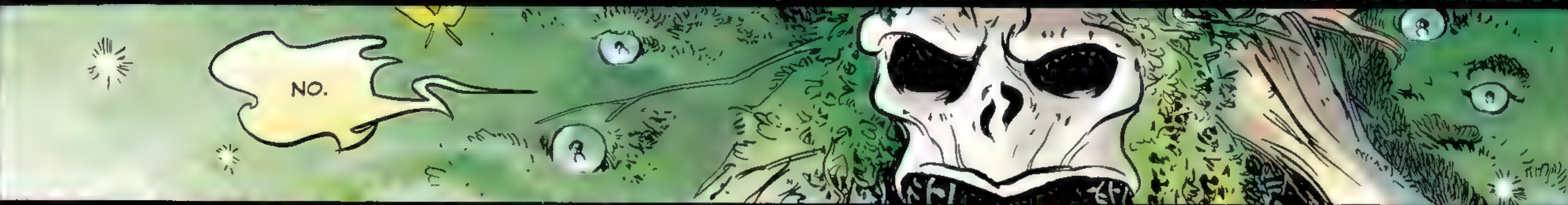




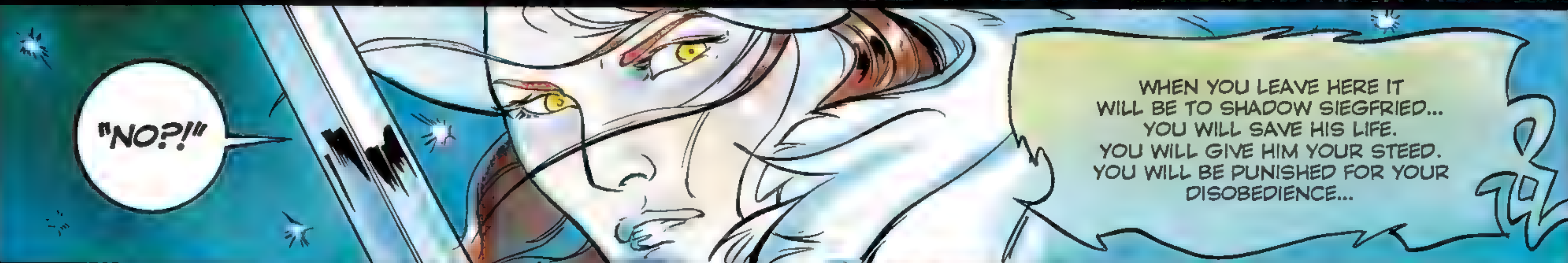
WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

TO KILL
SIEGFRIED
BEFORE I LOSE
MY MIND FOR
GOOD.

AND THEN
I'LL KILL
FAFNIR OR
I WILL DIE IN
COMBAT AS
VALKYRIE!

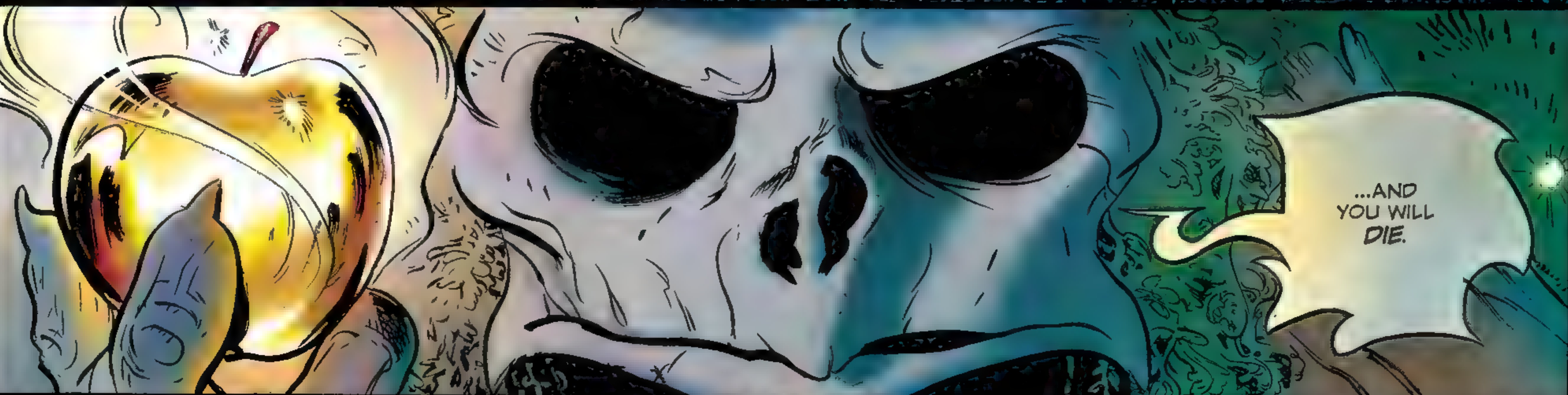


NO.



"NO?!"

WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE IT
WILL BE TO SHADOW SIEGFRIED...
YOU WILL SAVE HIS LIFE.
YOU WILL GIVE HIM YOUR STEED.
YOU WILL BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR
DISOBEDIENCE...



...AND
YOU WILL
DIE.

GIVE
THAT
BACK TO
ME!

GIVE ME
BACK MY
FREEDOM!

TOO
LATE.

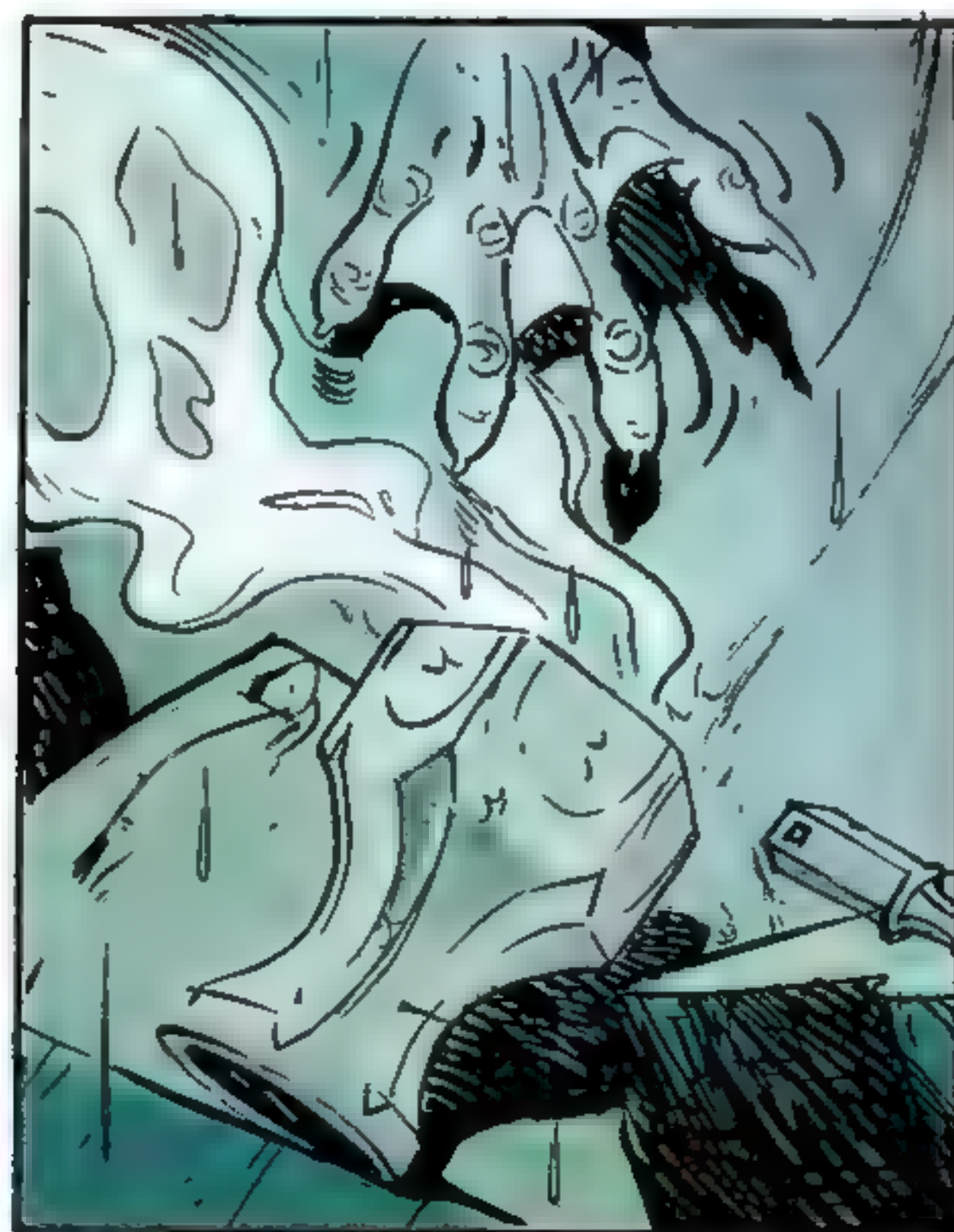
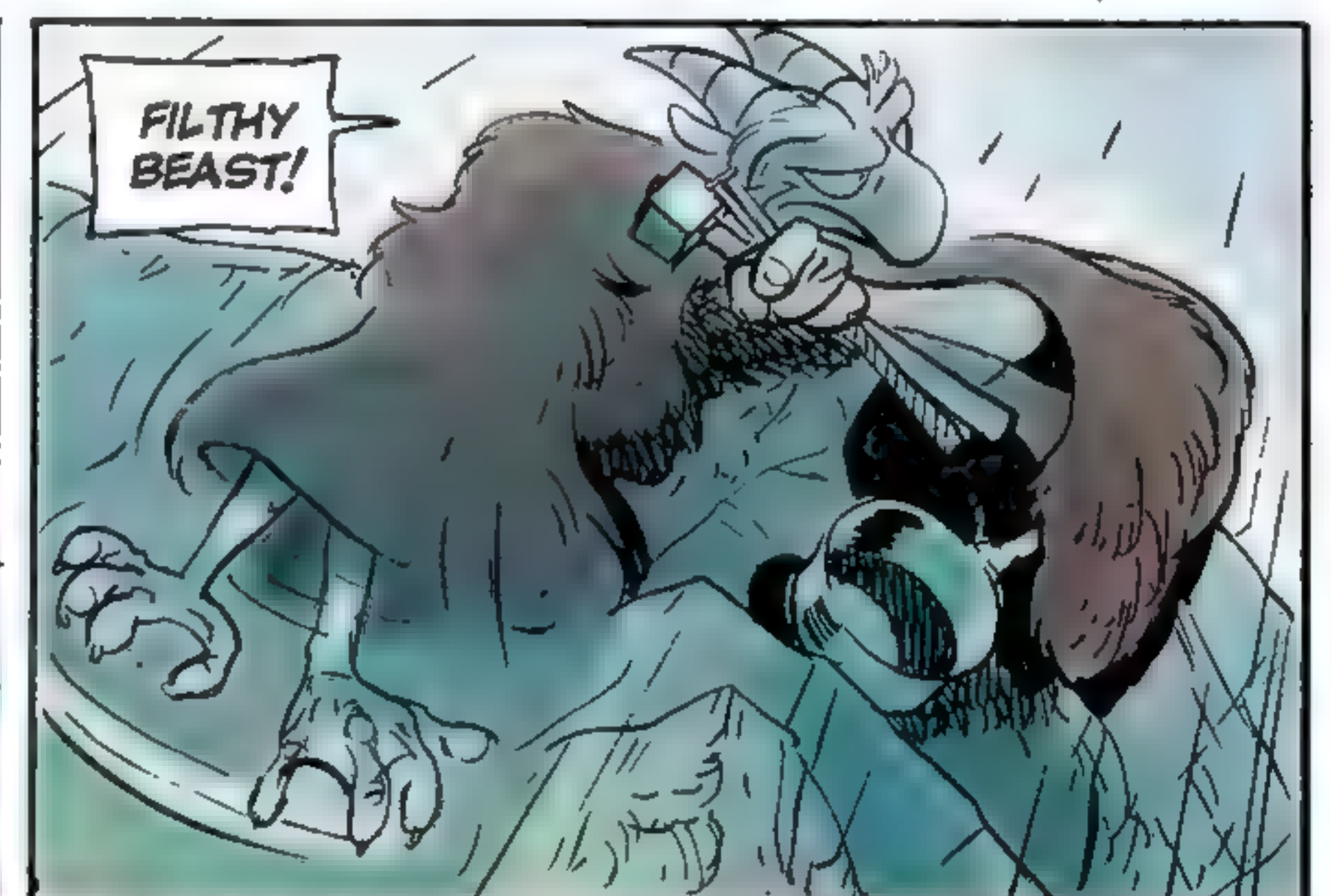
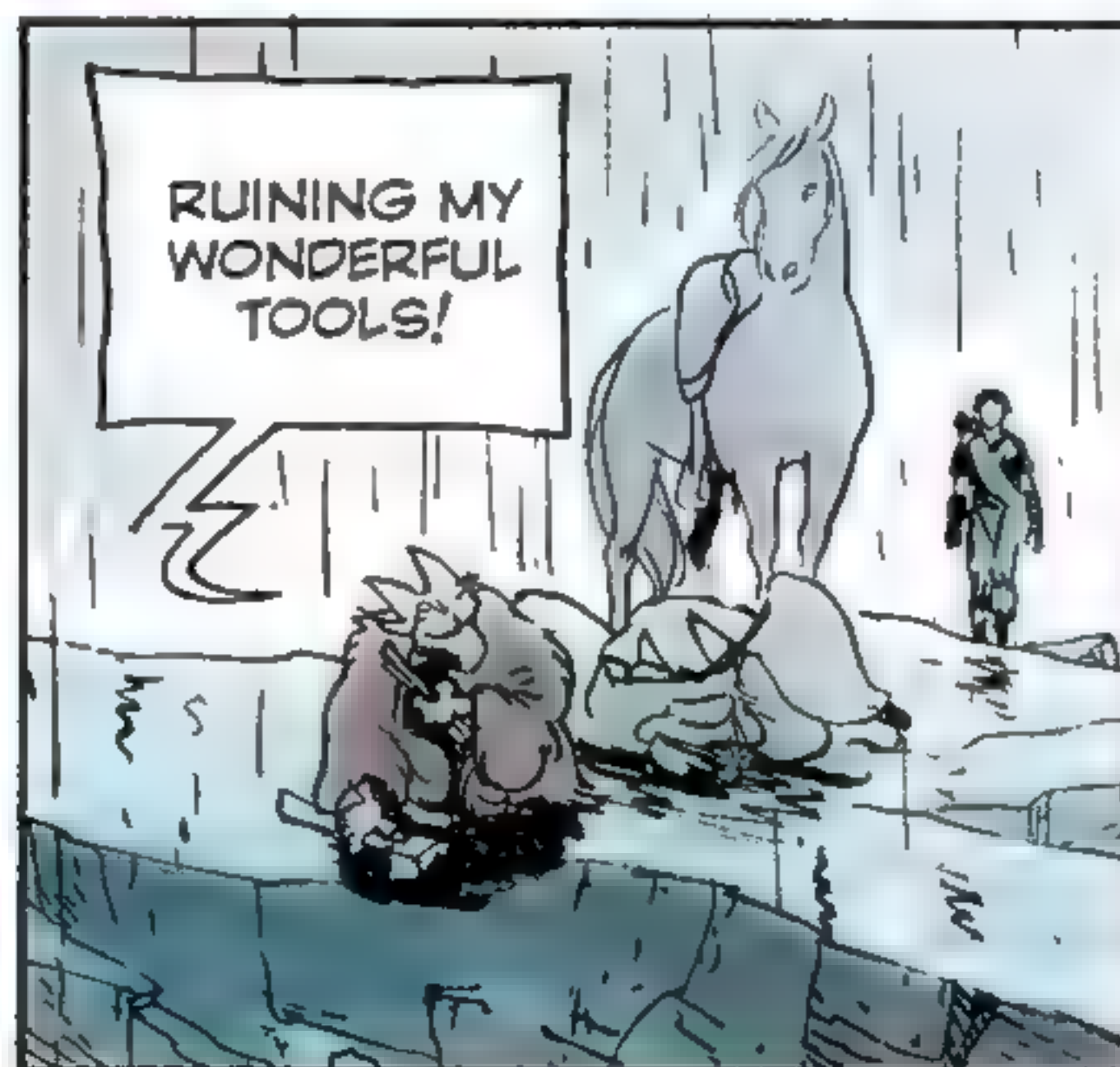
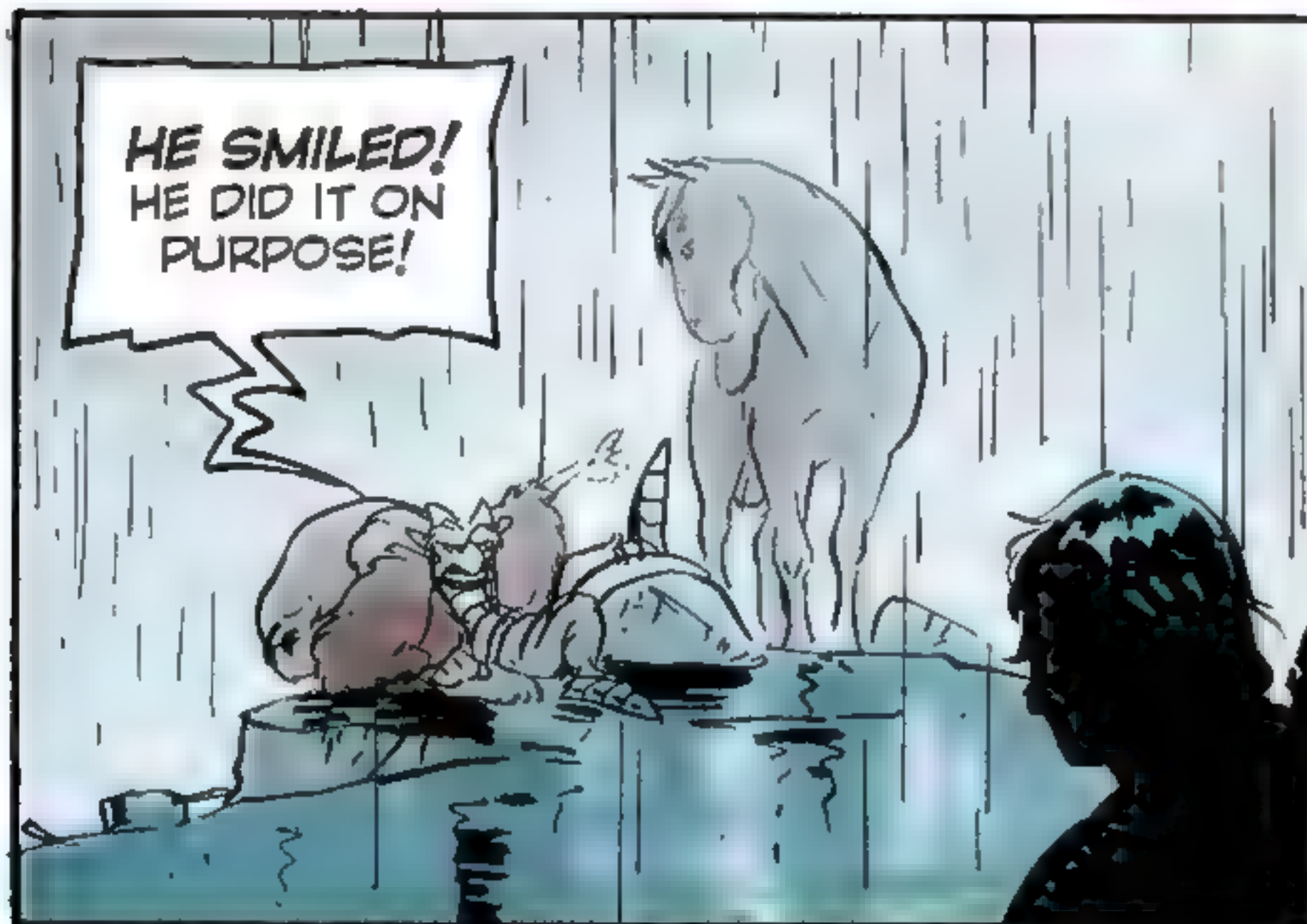
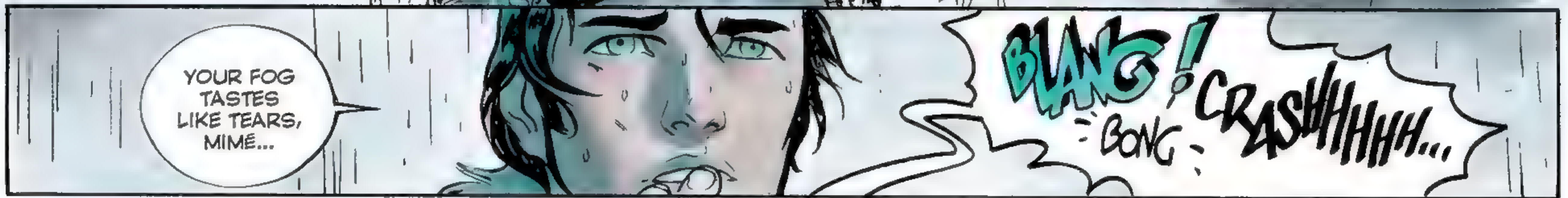
YOUR DESTINY IS
MAPPED OUT. IT IS
AS RELENTLESS
AS ODIN'S LAW...

...AND YOU
KNOW THAT
NOTHING
ESCAPES
HIS LAW.

GO...
SIEGFRIED IS NEARBY...
WE DO NOT HAVE
MUCH TIME...

YOU ONLY HAVE
ONE CHOICE LEFT
VALKYRIE...
THE LAST ONE...

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW
IT ALL TURNS OUT OR NOT?



END OF THE SECOND BOOK

*"Outcast art thou
From the clan of the gods:
For Broken now is our bond,
Henceforth from sight of my face
Art thou banned."*

THE VALKYRIE
ACT III, SCENE II

AN OPERA ON PAPER

INTERVIEW WITH ALEX ALICE, BY LAURENT KLOETZER AND ÉRIC CHAUVEAU

Laurent Kloetzer is the author of several science fiction and fantasy novels (the latest: *The Wounded Kingdom*, now in paperback from Gallimard/Folio SF). This interview is a sequel to “The Stuff of Dreams,” a conversation about *Siegfried* published in the special edition of Volume One.

Éric Chauveau is a connoisseur of Wagnerian opera and has been an attentive reader of Alex Alice’s work for ten years.



KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | How did you first encounter *The Valkyrie*?

COMPOSITION

ALEX ALICE | Music—the famous “Ride”—formed my first impressions of these fantastical creatures. But I feel “Valkyrie” is a word I’ve always known and loved. So I had the title for Volume II very early on. It conveys an entire imaginary world, immediately conjuring fates romantic and tragic alike, images of gods... I believe a great deal in titles and their emotional charge. Once they’re in place, you have to live up to them! A title serves as a constant reminder of the feelings I’m trying to arouse.

KC | In the first book, you said you had several close brushes and missed connections with Wagner’s tetralogy, and then listening to a recording inspired you to tell Siegfried’s tale. Has your interest in opera productions grown since then?

AA | Yeah, I wanted to see how other people had handled this story. What they’d come up with, what interested them... and also how such a fantastical world could be portrayed within the limits and constraints of opera staging.





KC | So what stayed with you? Did it influence your personal vision of Wagner's work, as well as your project?

AA | The most interesting productions I've seen all present, in some way or another, a reading slightly out of step with the libretto. For example, Patrice Chéreau moves the action to a 19th century industrial setting, the era when Wagner was composing his operas. But that wasn't what I wanted to do at all.

The librettos already have so much symbolic and metaphorical content that adding on another layer seemed pointless to me. To me, some directors were trying to put some distance between them and Wagner, in order to skirt his mythic territory, which made for very tricky staging. Putting a huge soprano with a horned helmet onstage today is a gamble, to say the least. But from my point of view, sidestepping such obstacles was also refusing to engage them.

KC | In contrast, what traces we have of the earliest productions of *The Ring Cycle* basically show characters made up in what might be a literal fashion that now seems utterly kitschy to us.

AA | I've had a chance to see sketches and photos of productions, costumes, settings, and stage machinery from certain early productions.

Of course, they're not fashionable any more, but I wouldn't call them kitsch. It's first and foremost a question of conventions. Today, you can put a watering can in a spotlight on an empty stage and get applause.

KC | So the productions you saw didn't really influence your work.

AA | No. The librettos were really my starting point, and led me backwards to the original myth.

KC | And yet, I get the impression it was something more than pure chance that led you to adapt these operas, especially these librettos. The second half of the 19th century, when they were written, is a period that seems to fascinate you.

AA | That's true. It's the peak of romanticism as I understand it: the exaltation of feeling and an intimate, almost mystical relationship with nature which transcends us. During this period, a few great myths are rediscovered: the Nibelungenlied, the Grail legend... Fantastical tales, of course, laden with meanings and symbols, but I'm not sure that the original versions would have had such an effect on me. 19th century rereadings of these primordial texts are suffused with the romantic spirit; it's the meeting of romanticism and mythological inspiration which fascinates me.

KC | So—just from a quick, initial read of the book—is it the romantic inspiration you're trying to capture on paper?

AA | What interests me above all is staying in touch with the emotions the story arouses, and the tragedy it sets up. That's something I don't want to step back from. As for symbolic reach—well, I think that's all the more powerful when the visual elements are handled in a simple, literal way. Distancing tactics and alienation put the symbols front and center to force reflection. Personally, I think symbols should melt into the story so they can speak to the unconscious. The reader's free afterward to wonder about what the story means.

KC | Have you found the same spirit in other works of the time? I'm thinking of painting in particular.

AA | Romantic painting seems to match the spirit of Wagner's music and libretti perfectly. An entire visual vocabulary emerges from that era, with painters like John Martin, Caspar Friedrich, and Ivan Aivazovsky, whose images convey the power of their emotions, the same quality of feeling I find in the operas.



KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | *The Valkyrie* is the title of the second volume of Wagner's tetralogy. Can you tell us how you "filtered" the libretti and their themes, and what's left of them in Book II?

LEITMOTIFS

ALEX ALICE | The connections between comics, myth, and opera are pretty complicated for me, and hard to untangle. I've done my best to integrate all my sources in creating my own version.

The opera can be complex because it has an enormous amount of time at its disposal to repeat and sum up key story elements. For the comic, I wanted something simple enough to be accessible to people not familiar with *The Ring* and Norse mythology. In this sense, Siegfried provided me the ideal character for exposition, since he himself was raised in ignorance; the reader enters the story at the same time as he does. Still, achieving this relative simplicity made me stray from the early material a great deal, especially in Volume 2. And then the characters started taking on lives of their own, and clamoring for more breathing room...

For example, the scenes describing the relationship between Mimé and Siegfried had their roots in the middle part of the third opera. At that moment, Siegfried has decided to find the dragon, and Mimé will lead him to it. Act change, scene change—and we're in front of Fafnir's lair. The voyage is elided.

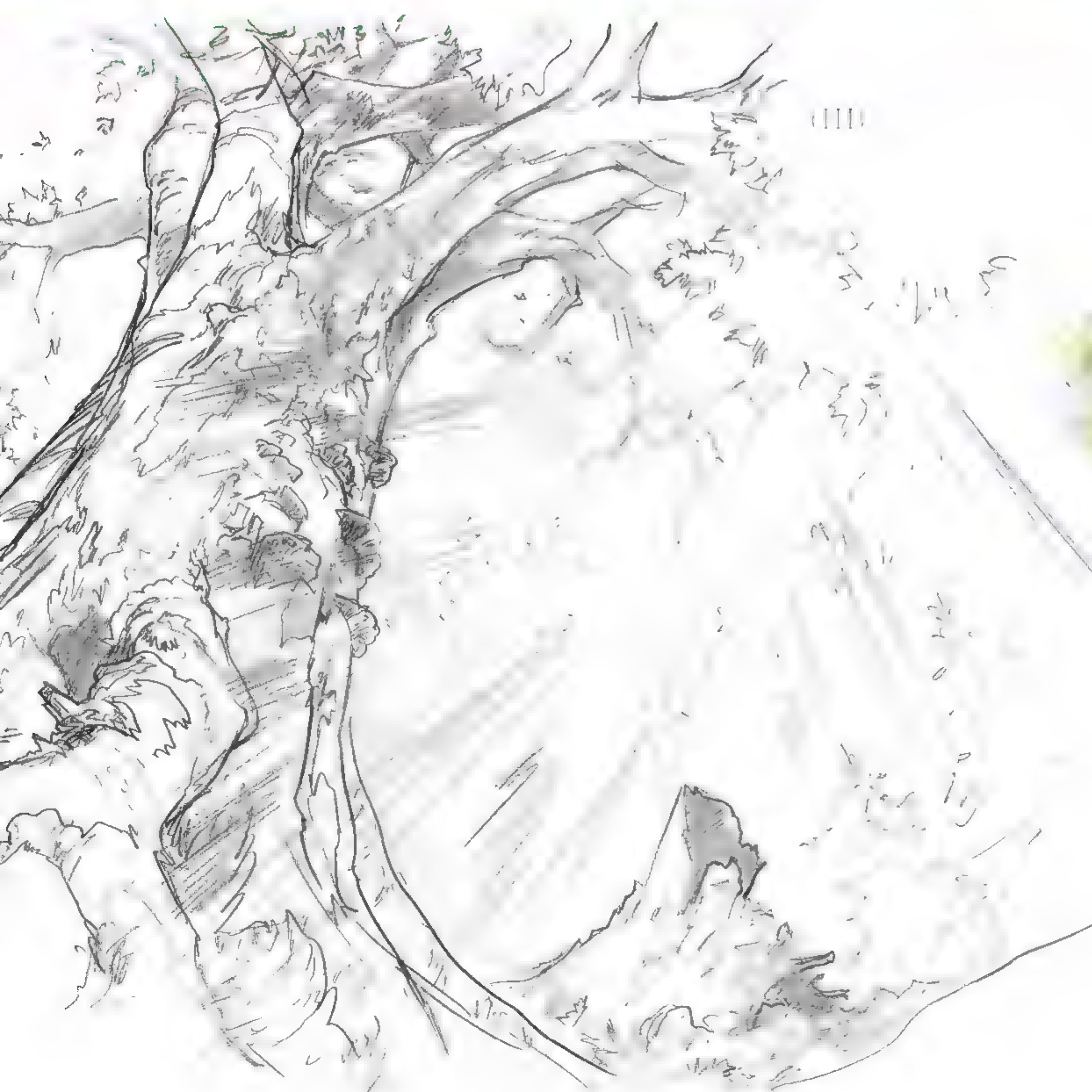


(1)

I don't know if staging constraints led Wagner to make that choice, but in my version, "my" Siegfried and "my" Mimé led me to flesh out that part of the story considerably. They leave the forest and forge, that bounded universe where they were stuck in a victim-torturer relationship. In Volume One, Mimé mistreats the child Siegfried, and then they switch roles, but their relationship is still warped, limited by their shared history. Trapped by a life in isolation, they're stuck in their roles. It is the same dynamic over and over again. This makes them unhappy, but it's also familiar and comfortable. And neither of them are willing to make the effort to get along better. The journey brings a change of context that slowly dissolves their established roles.

Their relationship is changed, and will have to evolve into what will prove, despite them, a strong if ambivalent bond.

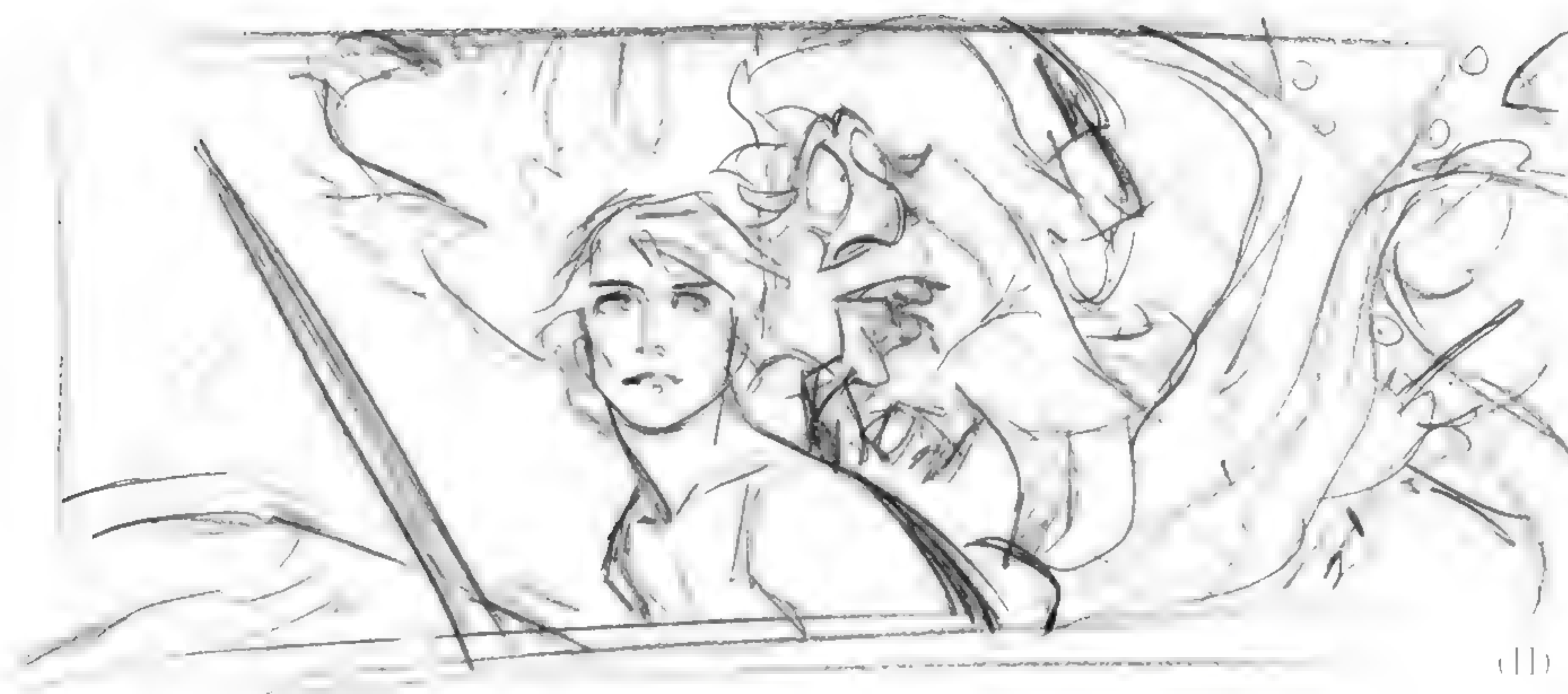
If this dimension of the tale is built around a new take on the characters, the world I throw them into takes its inspiration straight from Scandinavian legend. To be precise, one of the nine worlds of Norse myth, the land of the giants: Jotunheim. To me, the idea of giants represents the way saga-tellers perceived their environment. In Iceland, the landscape is a living thing and can only be seen as having intentions. I think that's where the idea of giants comes from, and I tried to return to that initial inspiration.



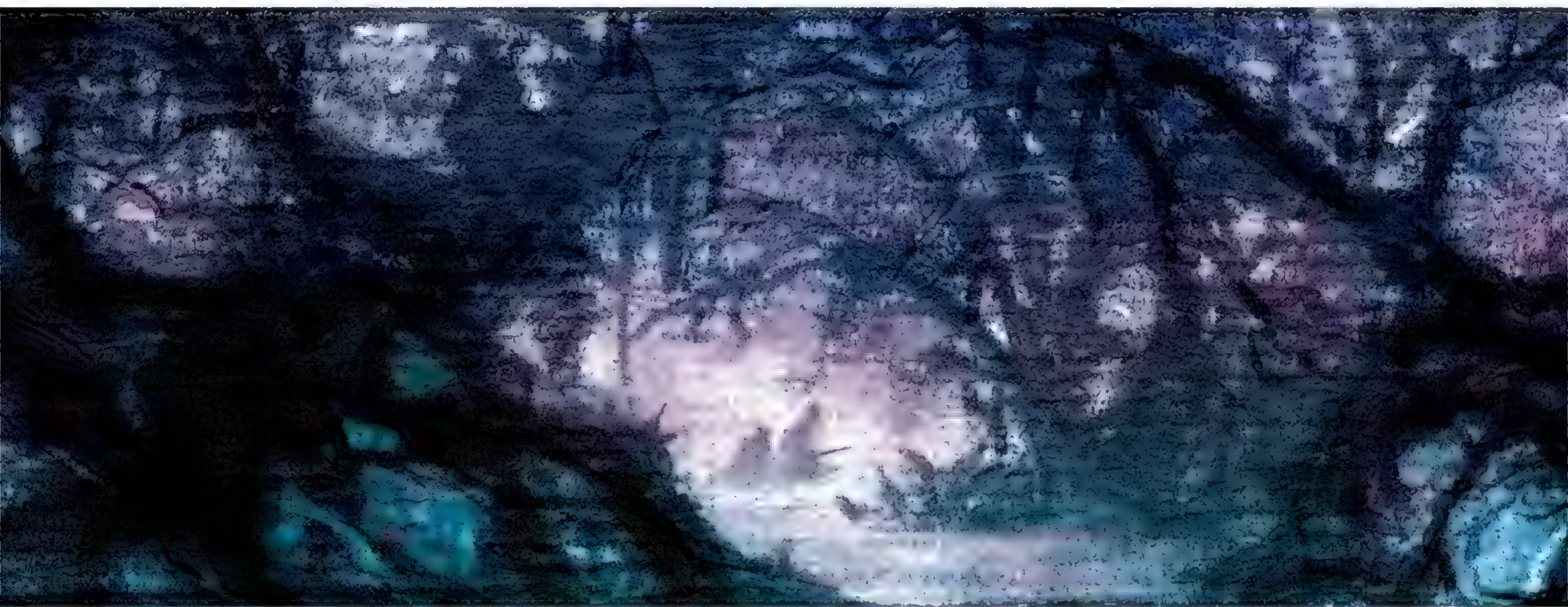
- I **THE FORGE AT THE EDGE OF THE FORBIDDEN FOREST.**
Sketch by Patrick Pion
- (II) **TOWARD THE FORBIDDEN FOREST.** Watercolor, 20 x 12 cm
- (III) **THE GREAT ASH.** 29 x 29 cm
- (IV) **FRANZ** — by Greg Stedler. Maresbald, the fabled of
the forest, glances toward his son, the sole offspring



(1)



(II)



(III)



(IV)

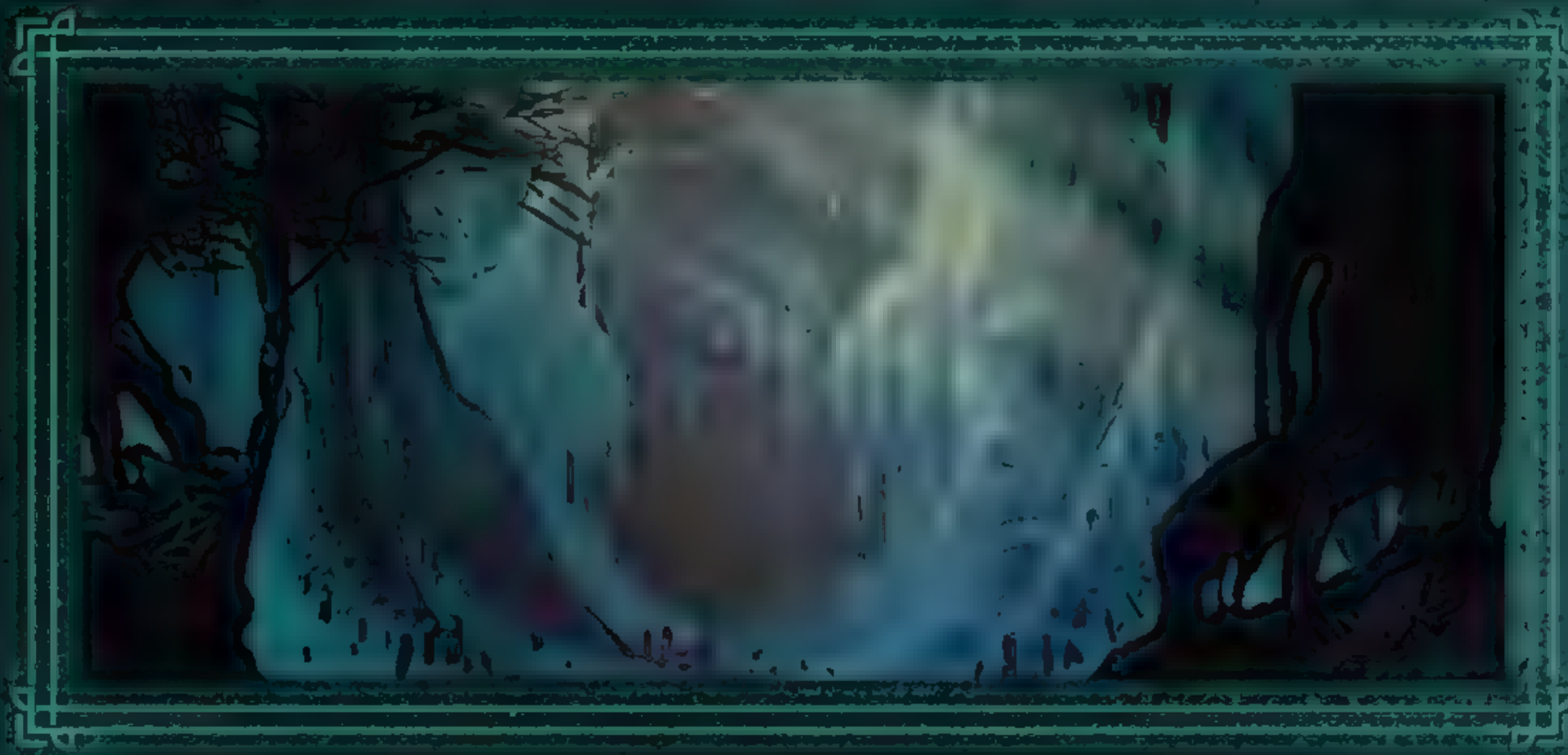
- I **MIMÉ.** *Suppléant, states there is no need of exploring the concept of a "hidden forest."*
- II **THE EXPLORERS.** *Presented*
- III **LOST IN THE MISTS.** *Atmospheric study, pencil and digital*
- IV **THE GIANT'S FLESH.** *Sketch for Peter's battle to "hide" forest.*



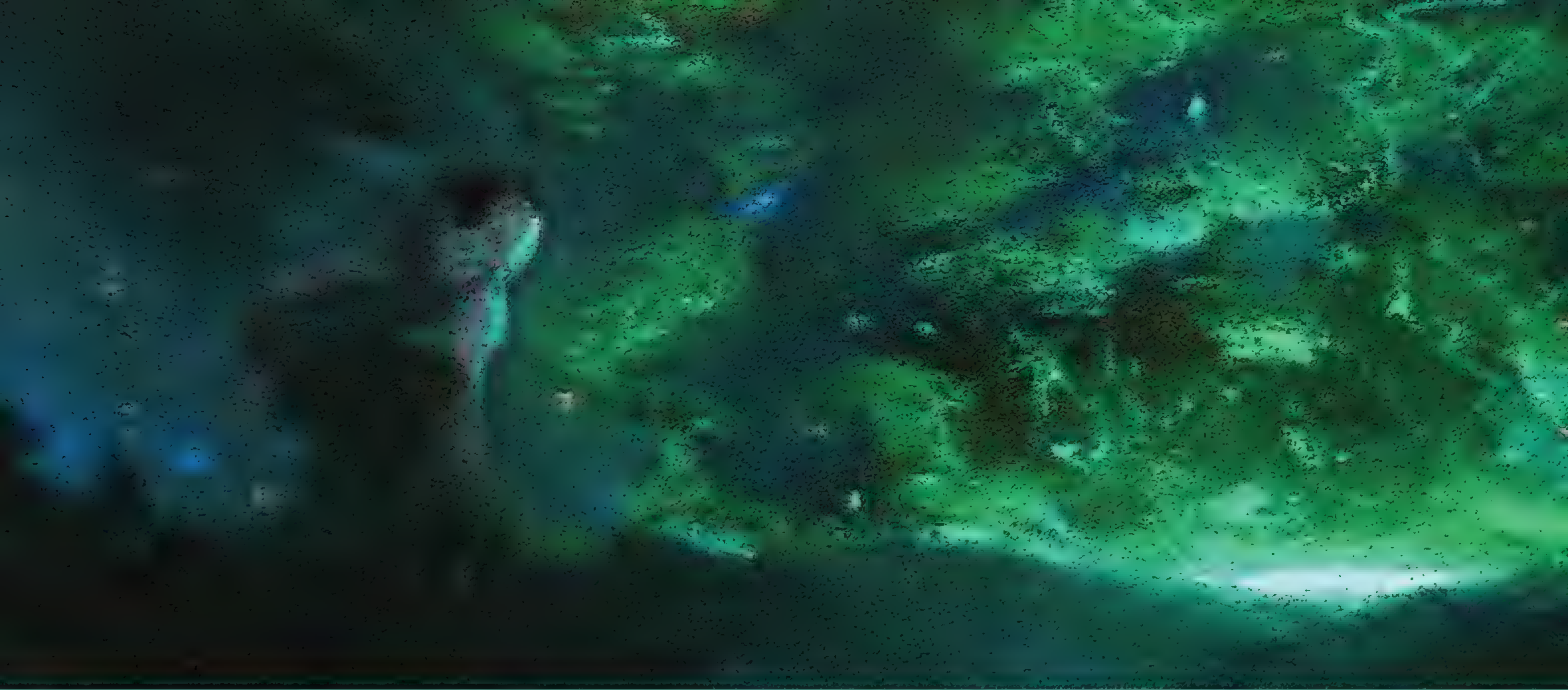
II



III



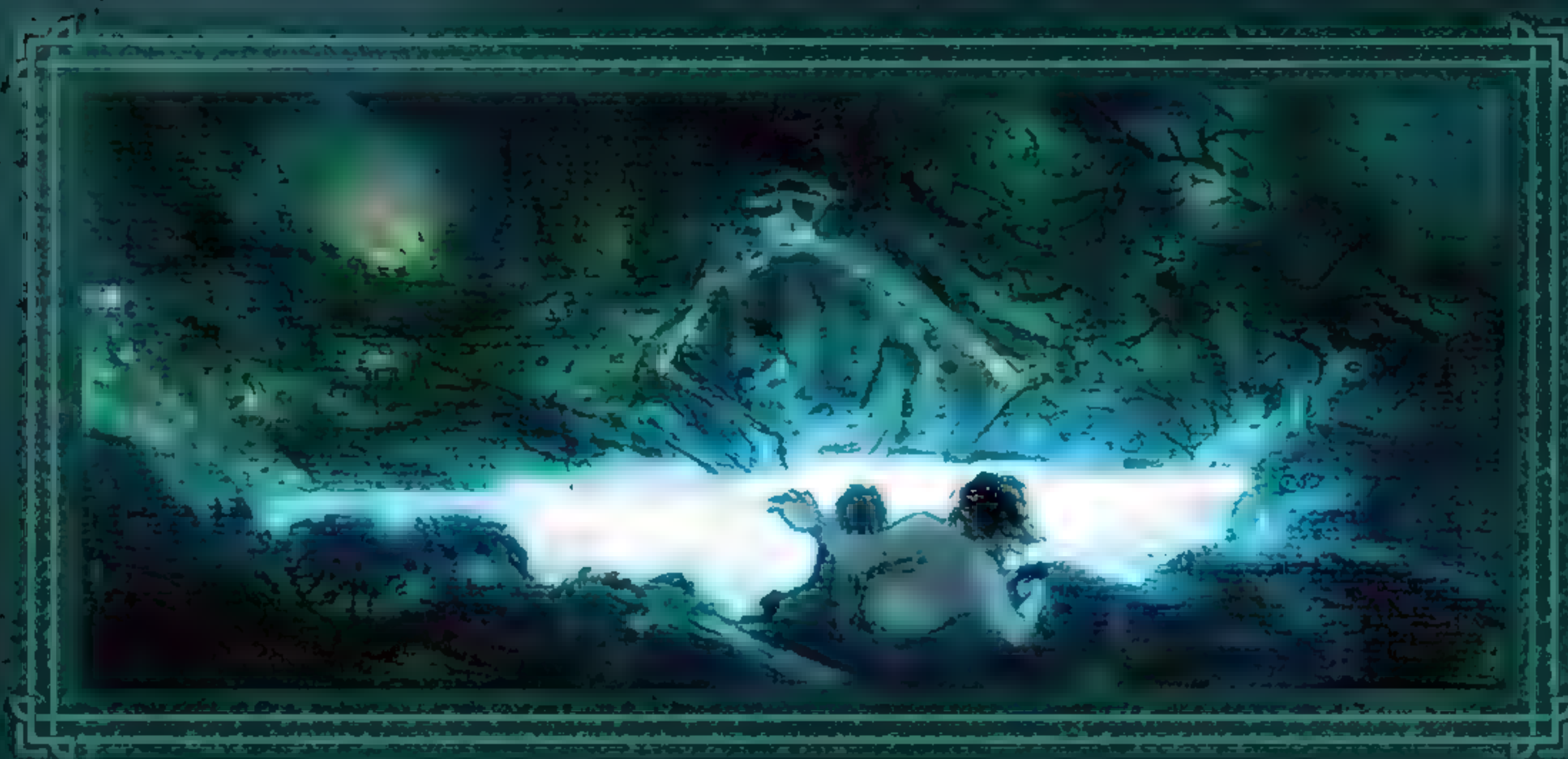
III



(I)



(II)



(III)

ATMOSPHERE STUDIES

(I) *Pastel.*

(II) *Watercolor.*

(III) *Digital, by Mathieu Lauffray.*

(IV) *Pastel.*



(I)

KC | So we move away from the opera and toward the original legends. Is that also the case in the scenes with the Völva, which form the backbone of the story?

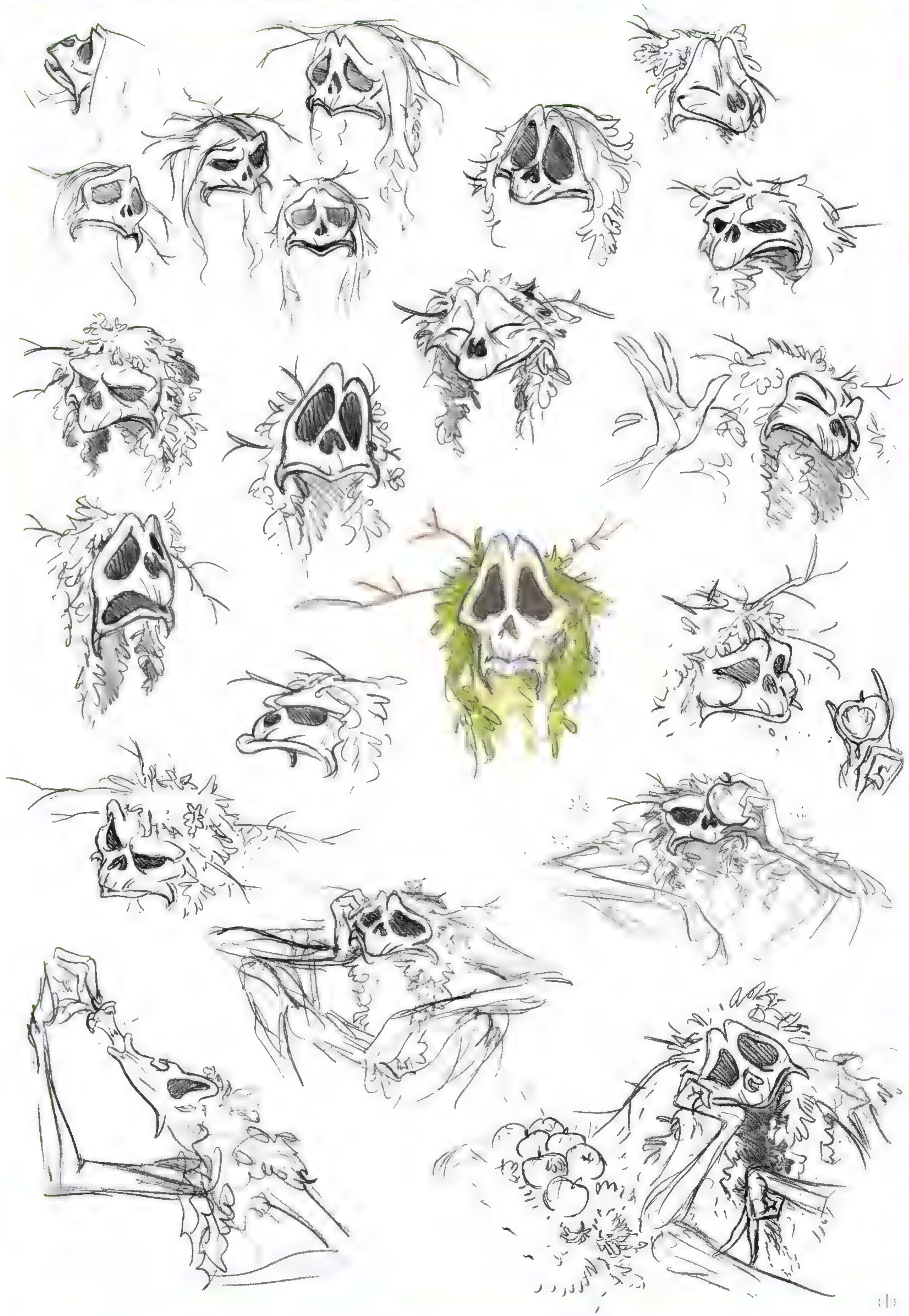
AA | The scene where Siegfried visits the Völva (the “seeress”) isn’t in the opera, but has a direct antecedent in the Völsunga Saga, in a very brief form: Siegfried consults an oracle at the beginning of his adventures. It’s only a few lines, but for Régis Boyer, a great specialist in Norse mythology, the moment when Siegfried learns about his destiny is a fundamental element of the Norse hero’s journey. The hero must know his fate, accept it, and accomplish it, or be unworthy.

(I) **INKING STUDY.** Before launching into these pages, I tested every technique at my disposal on this image. Brush, pen, sponge, spattering, even scratching. Finally, I used a combination of all these techniques, plus one left over from childhood: blowing on a drop of ink to spread it randomly. For higher pressure, I used an airbrush on the finer branches of the diseased trees in the Forbidden Forest (see *The Valkyrie*, page 18).

(II) **THE VÖLVA.** Pencil studies. More or less humanoid, more or less terrifying, but always rising from the earth, covered in moss, surrounded by weird mushrooms...







(1)

KC | In comics, of course, revealing what will happen before the story gets there might seem like a great way to kill the suspense!

AA | True. Still, I tried to keep this essential element of Norse heroism, in two main ways. On one hand, Siegfried will indeed get a glimpse of his future from the Völva, but in a cryptic, incomplete fashion. It's an important transition, where he receives lessons he can't understand right away, which will be useful to him when he's matured enough.

But the theme of immutable fate is at the heart of the other part of the story, the Valkyrie's tale. In the end, it is the warrior virgin who must live with the terrible weight of the knowledge of her tragic destiny in this tale.

KC | The Valkyrie gazes into the Völva's mirror, and finds herself in a strange trap where past, present, and future intermingle... I find this dizzying narrative gambit particularly interesting. How did it start?

AA | I wanted a narrator with a point of view on the story. So it had to be one of the main characters. I'd already written the part when Siegfried meets the Völva. This fascinating, apparently omniscient character soon suggested herself. To give her a reason to speak, she needed someone to talk to, and so, since I was trying to develop the Valkyrie's character, things naturally fell into place. All that remained was to integrate this storyline into the main one, and that's where the originality of the structure happened: a story that takes place in the past, the present, and the future all at once.

Such a structure can only happen in a mythological universe where fate is inevitable: the future as foretold is no mere prediction, but reality. I got a great deal of pleasure from playing with dizzying perspectives along these lines, which meshed really well with the story's themes. This structure also echoes the prologue to *Twilight of the Gods*, the final "day" of Wagner's Ring Cycle. In the first scene, the three Norns, goddesses who spin fate, invoke the past, present, and future of the world. My Völva is something of a combination of those three characters.



(PAGE 100-101) THE VÖLVA. Odm himself drew his knowledge of the world from her pool. The roots of the World Tree Yggdrasil, the Cosmic Ash, sink into this pond (glimpsed on Page 60).

- (1) **STUDY.** I wanted to treat the Völva like a female equivalent of the Nibelung. She is both their mother and their opposite: a creature of moss, wise, passive, omniscient. Her eyes are scattered throughout the world, some in the Forbidden Forest. Her look owes a lot to Aughra, the oracle in *The Dark Crystal*.

(PAGE 104-105) ATMOSPHERE STUDY, digital.





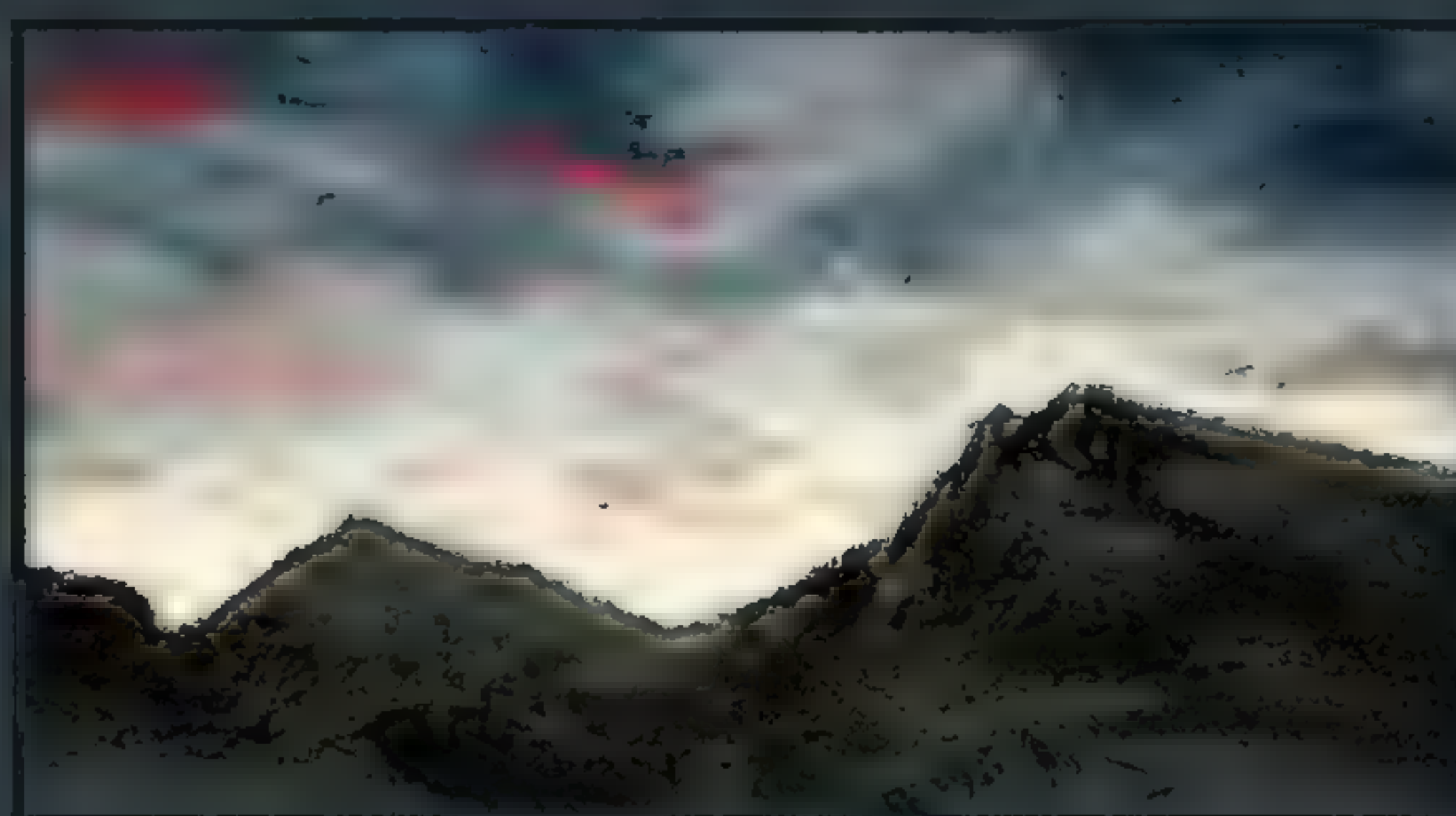
KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | How does one draw divine characters?

DEPICTIONS

ALEX ALICE | I've always been hesitant about depicting gods, because in trying to depict a credible deity in a narrative medium, one soon strays into kitsch. You'll understand if you've seen *Clash of the Titans*.

The problem as I see it is depicting a god out of the context and state of mind that created it. All the more so, since our own religious context is so heavily influenced by the Old Testament, which forbids the worship of idols, images of God. This taboo corresponds to the idea of a transcendent God who isn't part of this world, and who as a result transcends human understanding. Our civilization is deeply marked by this concept. It contrasts a single all-powerful god is worlds away from the Viking idea of fallible divinities subject to human passions and destined to perish. How to reconcile these two visions and convey the idea of a Norse god that's credible to contemporary eyes?

One solution consisted of not caring about the contemporary perception, and just imagining beings the Vikings invented, who would thus look like them. Idealized Vikings!





AA | First I had to get into the mindset of the era, give my imagination free rein within the borders of the ancient Norse world, its shapes and materials. I did a few exploratory sketches (see page 125), but found the results a bit weak. The shapes felt fake. I hadn't immersed myself enough in Viking culture, and I didn't want to just go for the picturesque. So I tried tending toward the archetypal, the universal. For example, with the headgear, plumed helmets are popular in depictions of Norse gods, but they're also symbols you find denoting divinity in other civilizations.

KC | When you look at how the Völva and the Valkyrie are handled pictorially, you realize they're total opposites, just like Siegfried and Mimé.

AA | Exactly. I need both. Classically realistic characters help the reader into the story and the world, while much more stylized creatures like Mimé and the Völva give me access to a much broader range of expressions.

KC | There's also a big difference in how the characters and the settings are handled.

AA | Yeah, the Valkyrie is inked in black and white in a somewhat abstract, but very pictorial, manner. On the other hand, for settings like the swamp around the Völva (which is part of her characterization), I used sponges and spattering. That way, I got inks with more substance and more accidental effects, less controlled by pen or brush. When they confront the Völva, the characters are face to face with themselves: the swamp water is a mirror, and to wade into it is to enter yourself. You enter and exit the Völva's cave through water. In

the swamp, elements mingle: air, water, mist... This is the land of symbols, the unconscious. So the handling fits the subject. I used techniques that create chaos beyond my control. With the sponge, shapes appear by themselves, and all I have to do is figure out which I want to bring forward or leave blurry. Plus, it's fun to use.

KC | You mentioned inking. Have you considered coloring directly?

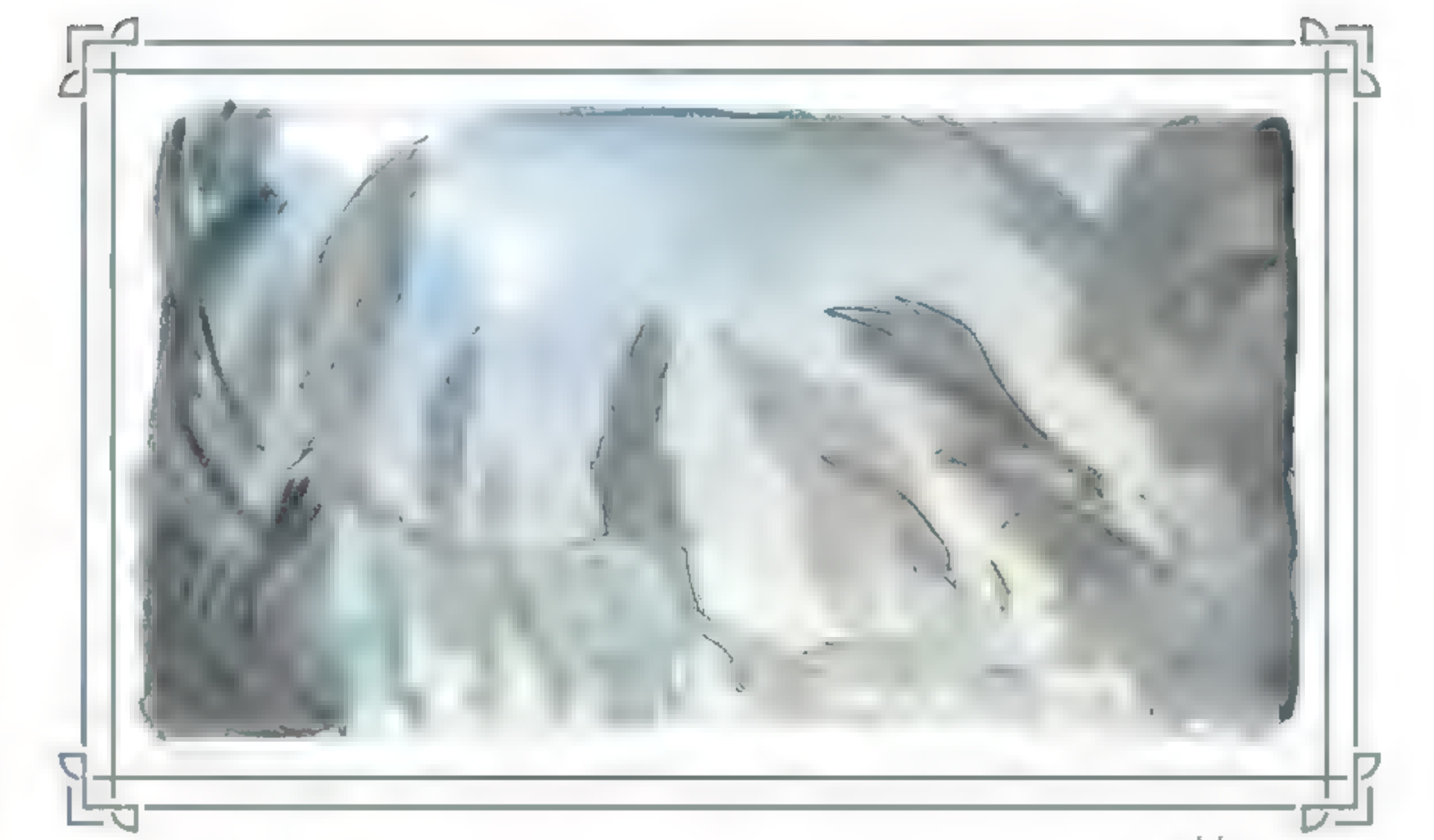
AA | Yeah. That's a technique I like a lot, and I wondered if I'd use it for *Siegfried*. But for me, inking is comics: the moment you go from a drawing in the traditional sense to an iconic image, a drawing that becomes language. This is particularly true with faces—the image becomes descriptive, more a code than a representation of reality, something great creators like Hergé and Tezuka understood. For example, Tintin is a coded face: he doesn't look like anyone, but everyone can project themselves onto him. Without the necessity of inking, I'd be in danger of losing this obviousness. But the temptation toward coloring directly never goes away. Who knows? Maybe I'll give in someday...

(PAGE 106) BRUNNHILDE SLOWLY AND SILENTLY LEADS HER HORSE DOWN THE PATH TO THE CAVE. Illustration from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, by Arthur Rackham (1910).

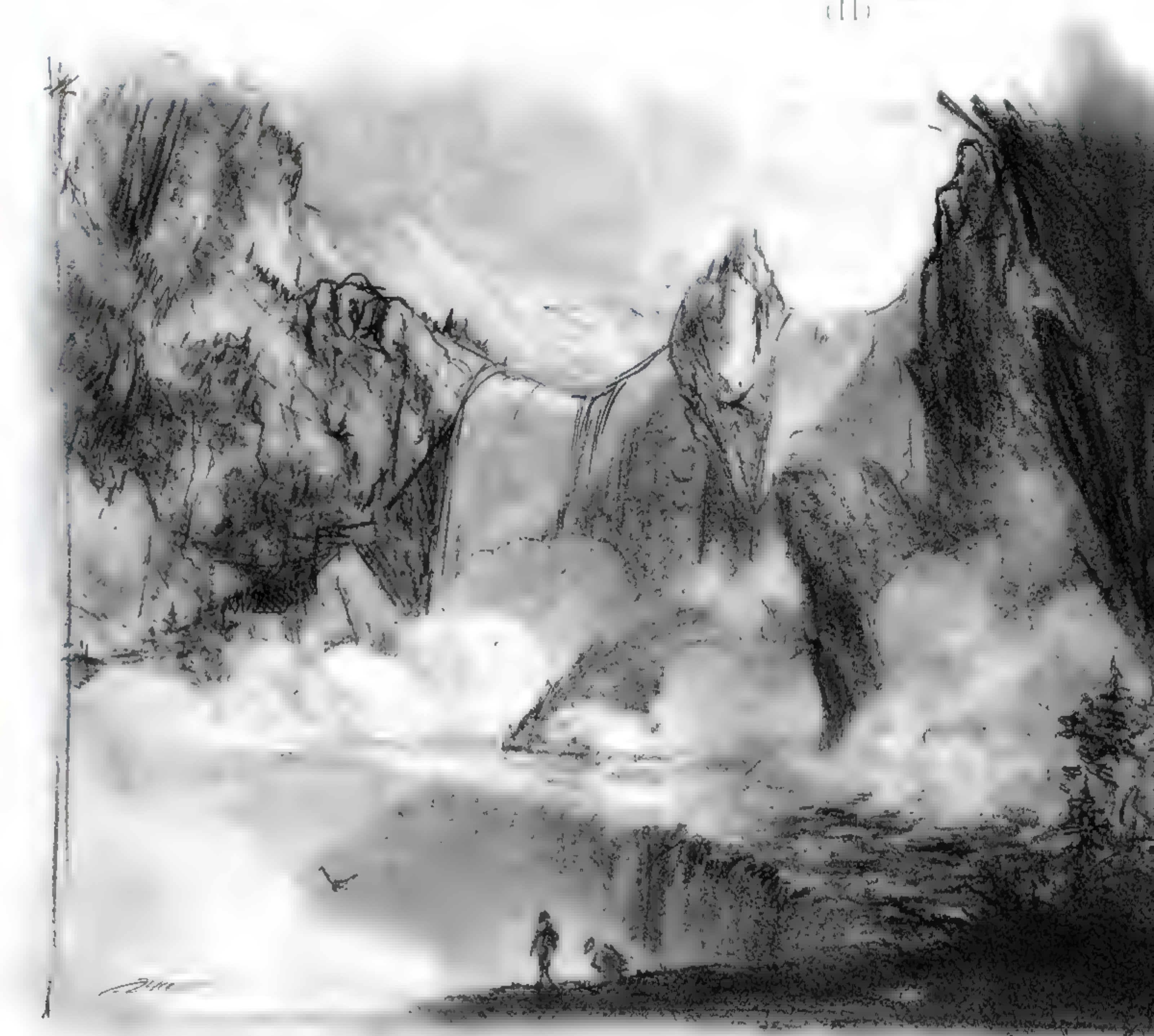
ATMOSPHERE STUDIES FOR THE LAND OF GIANTS. The second volume was a challenge to color: Mimé couldn't be exposed to sunlight, so all the action took place between dusk and dawn. But I wanted this part of the story to have a fairly light tone, in counterpoint to the tragedy of the gods. I used every trick I knew to stay within a certain range of luminosity: shadowy ravines, rosy dawns, clouds scarlet with the sun's last rays, moonlight...



(I)



(II)



(III)



(IV)

(I) **THE ROCK GIANT.** Taken from an homage to The Quest for the Time End for an animated background

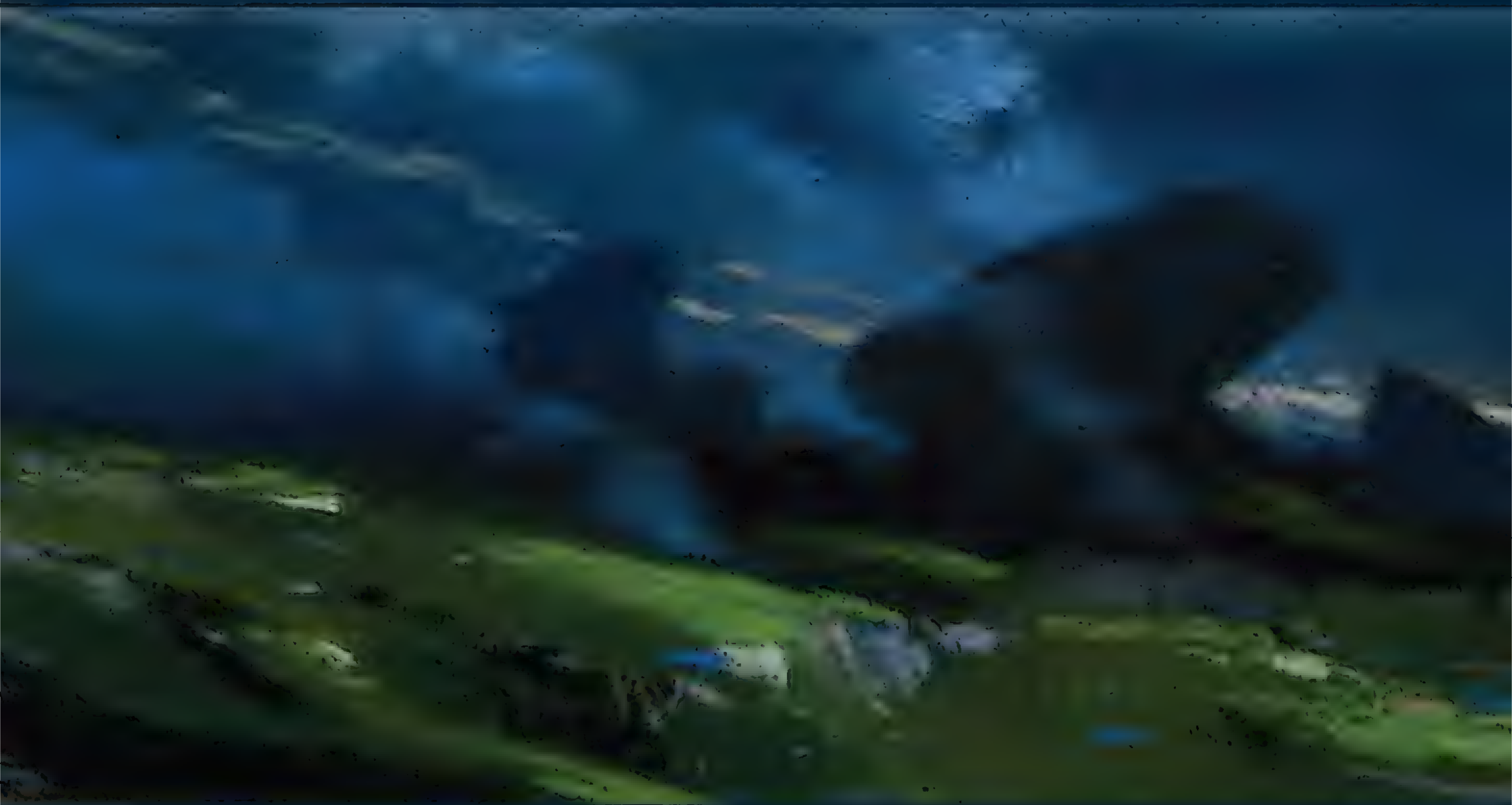
(II) **THE LAND OF THE GIANTS.** Study, watercolor, about 8 x 4 cm

(III) **ROUGH LAYOUT.** Study, watercolor, about 8 x 4 cm

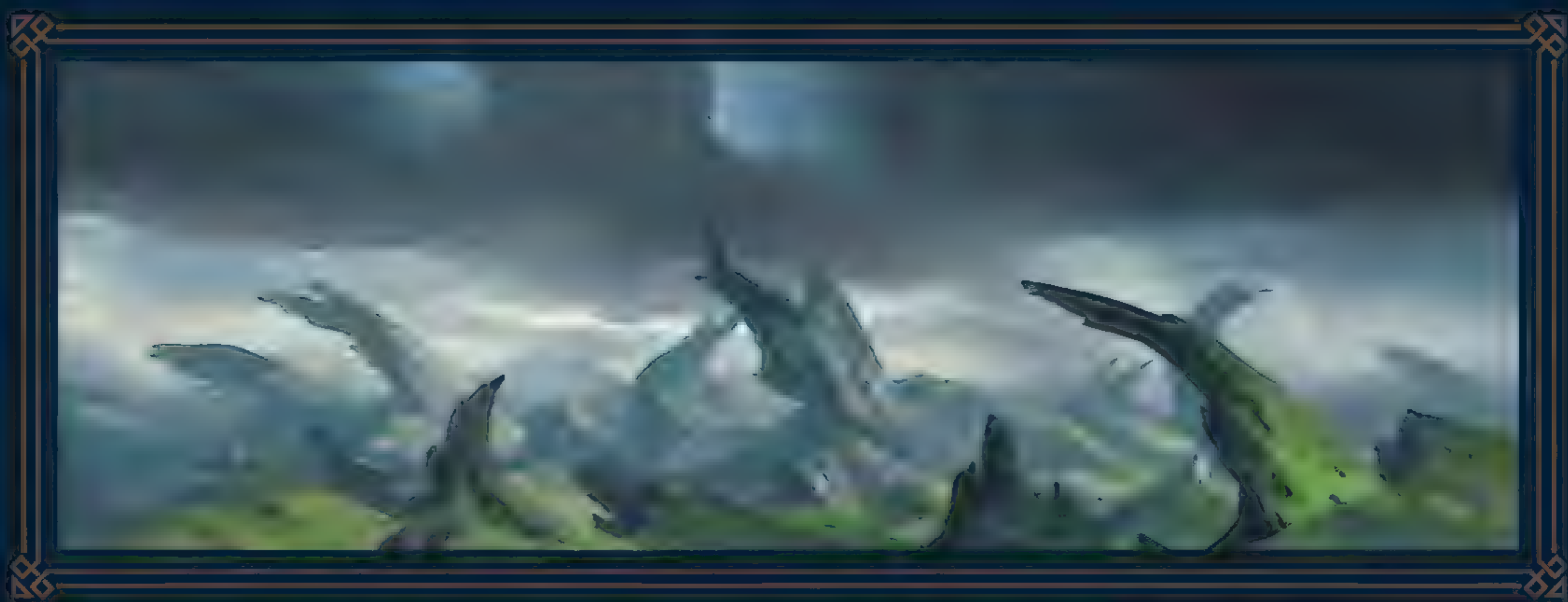
(IV) **THE LAND OF THE GIANTS.** Study, watercolor, about 8 x 6 cm



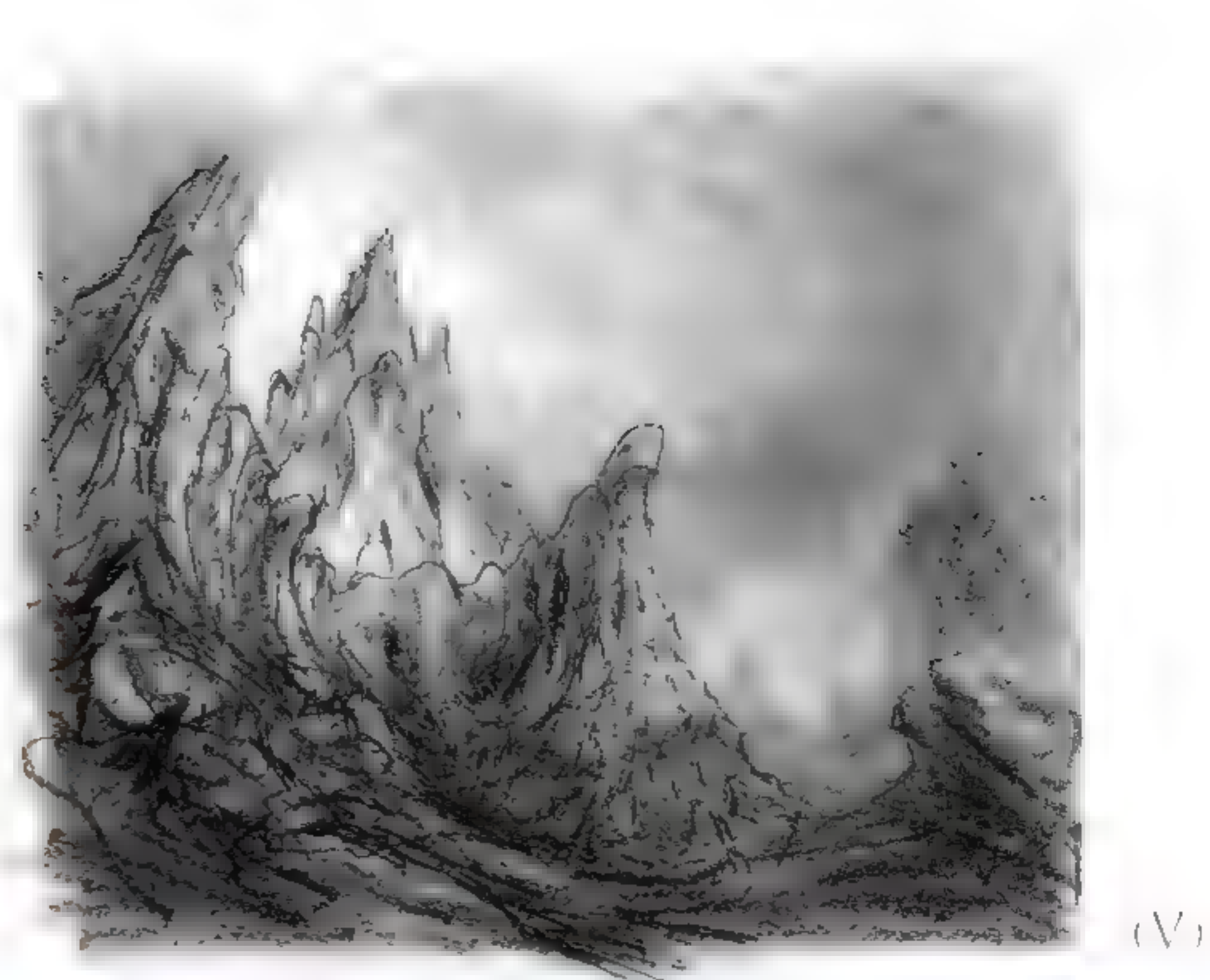
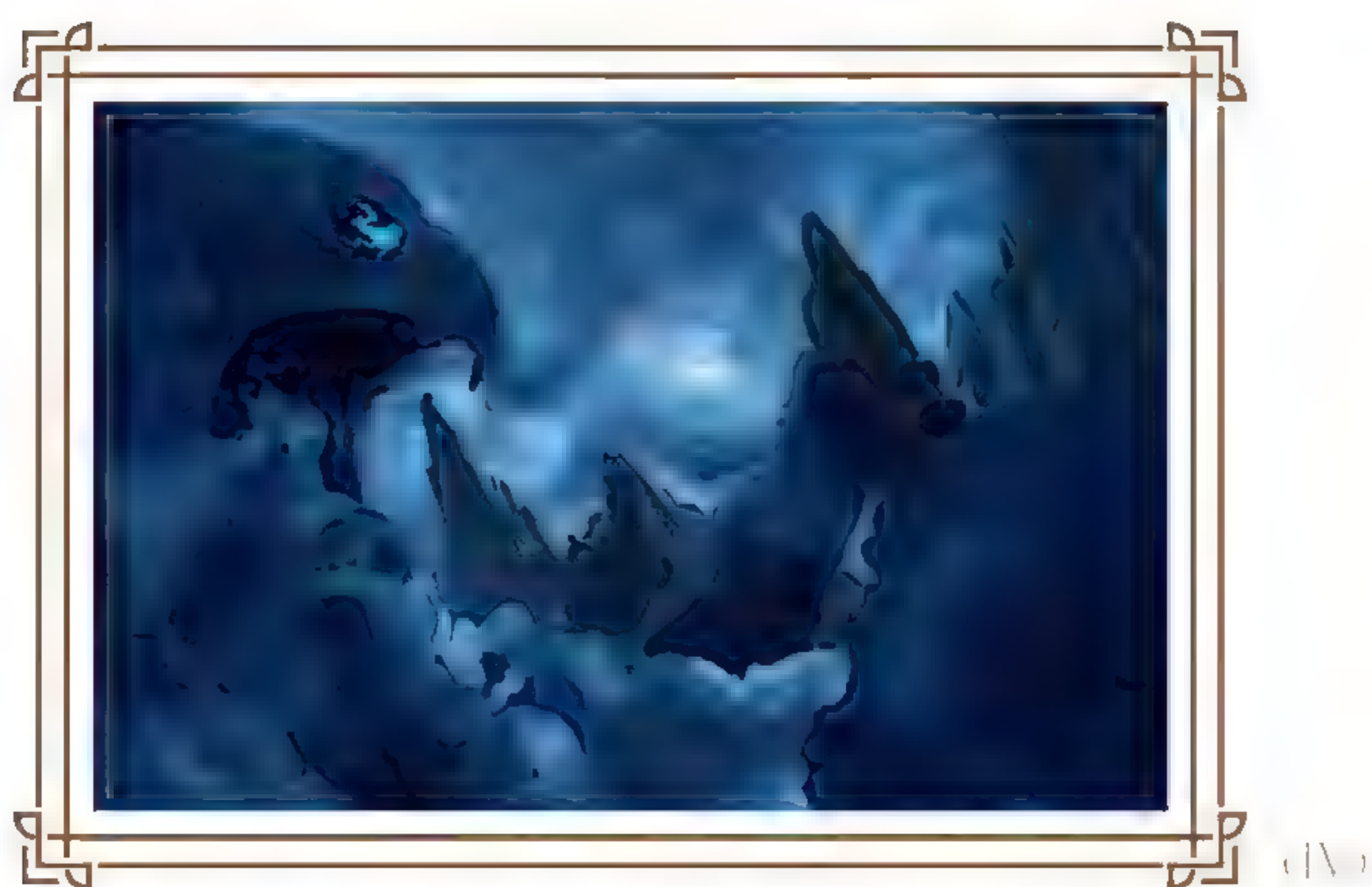
(I)



(II)



(III)



KC | The way you handled the cover for Volume Two, as well as certain pages, like the one where Siegfried's fate is revealed to him, also remind me of a tradition from the end of the 19th century that exalted the excess of dramatic emotion.

AA | True, those allegorical images always touch something deep in me. The Valkyrie's character is, at heart, an allegorical figure come to life. A symbol of death who becomes a woman of flesh and blood. What interests me is taking this symbolic figure and making a real character from it, sending it out on a quest for its humanity, in pursuit of feelings she discovers along the way, shattered by her passage from goddess, from symbol incarnate, to woman.

(I) **THE LAND OF THE GIANTS.** *Pastel, 16 x 8 cm*

(II) **THE SHATTERED LANDS.** *Pastel, 16 x 8 cm*

(III) **THE SHATTERED LANDS.** *Acrylic-vinyl, 36 x 12 cm*

(IV) **THE WIND GIANT.** *Digital*

(V) **THE DARK MOUNTAINS.** *Pencils*

(VI) **THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.** *Pastel, 16 x 8 cm*

(VII) **THE WIND GIANT.** *Pencils*





KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | Now let's turn to the Valkyrie's mythic origins. Régis Boyer claimed the Valkyrie was "born of the Northern mists;" he meant this in the most concrete way. The fogbound skies of northern Europe encourage people to imagine fantastical figures floating in the clouds.

BRUNNHILDE

ALEX ALICE | Iceland, where the saga of Siegfried/Sigurd was written, is a place of great harmony between the landscape and the mythology it gave birth to. We can see the forces of nature in action: they're alive, and it soon seems they must be benevolent. The rocks in the fog can only be trolls or Nibelungs. The volcanoes, the glaciers, cracking with a thunderous noise, must be giants. The Valkyries are, naturally, to be found in the clouds.

KC | The accepted etymology of Valkyrie is she who chooses (-*kyrja*) warriors (*valr*-) fallen on the field of battle.

AA | This aspect isn't really felt in the series, since the story mainly takes place outside the world of men. But I haven't totally given up on this well known idea, and so you can see, in the script excerpt featured in Volume One, a Valkyrie scouring the battlefield. I won't be discussing this aspect in the comic, but I have it in mind when I think of the Valkyrie. She has known battle, she knows what bravery and death are. Which is what allows her to judge Siegfried so harshly, a child ~~wielding a weapon he hasn't yet mastered~~.





(PAGE 116) **THE VALKYRIE'S VIGIL**, by Edward Robert Hughes (1906). A Valkyrie in the Pre-Raphaelite fashion: melancholy, alone, pallid, and terribly romantic.

(PAGE 118) **TOTENDOM**. Cover for a comic by Robin Recht and Gabriel Delmas. This fantasy Joan of Arc was where I began to develop the theme of the warrior virgin in painting. © Humanoides Associés

(ABOVE) **STUDIES**. Different approaches to the Valkyrie, between virgin and warrior. Since my realistic attempts at armor were neither realistic nor believable, in the end I went for something stylized to the point of abstraction.





KC | In Volume One, we saw that your work led you to adapt the stuff of myth in order to tell Siegfried’s story. Who are the Valkyries, in your vision of this mythical world?

AA | They’re Odin’s daughters, immortal virgins with superhuman powers, entirely devoted to their father. Only one of them, whom I won’t name, falls in love with the race of men. Her fall begins in the first scene of Volume One, when she remains captivated by the human love between Siegmund and Sieglinde, before being torn from her fascination by her father.

KC | Why not name her?

AA | Apart from Siegfried’s mother, the Valkyrie is the only of Odin’s daughters to develop her own personality. So I don’t need a name to set her apart. In general, I prefer not to burden the story with proper names. I don’t think her name will be mentioned till the end. The character is called Brunhilde in Wagner, *Siegfried*, and in certain legends. I prefer “The Valkyrie.”

KC | Your Valkyrie is an astonishing artistic composition, and a great success. A woman, a ghost, a warrior, a creature like the blade of a sword—drawn with simple lines and little detail, entirely in white.

AA | Her armor is an immaculate breastplate. In my initial sketches, her armor was realistically colored, depending on the material. Here I’ve gone with a total pictorial concept: white armor that represents nothing, is made of “nothing.”

(PAGE 120) COVER STUDY. Pastel, 16 × 24 cm

(PAGE 118) TOTENDOM. Cover for a comic by Robin Recht and Gabriel D’Amico. Pastel, 16 × 24 cm. One of the first developments of the comic book project. Howard S. A. A. A.

(ABOVE) I FLEE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND AM PURSUED: WARFATHER FOLLOWS CLOSE. HE NEARS, HE NEARS, IN FURY! SAVE THIS WOMAN! SISTERS, YOUR HELP! Illustration from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, by Arthur Rackham, 1910.







(III)

KC | Can you describe her for us?

AA | She's simply drawn, veering into the realm of abstraction, which is ideal for divine creatures. The helmet suggests a skull, since Valkyries are the angels of death. But they're in white, like positive versions of the classic image of the grinning reaper in a black cowl. After all, they come for warriors who died on the battlefield to bring them to Valhalla. Death is good news for them! I kept the wings from classical depictions on the helmet. In Siegfried, everything divine is associated with birds and the element of air. Odin has his ravens, and the Valkyries are white versions of them. I wanted to give her face an aspect at once human and sublime; I was going for a kind of timeless beauty. I worked a lot on the skin, using colors. You'll notice that the color of the Valkyrie's skin is undefinable, iridescent, and changes according to the situation. I was inspired by an image I like a lot,

which for some portrays a man, Parsifal: a kind of face with very marked bone structure, in the classical vein. As for Grane, at first I tried to give him a harness, but that didn't fit a sentient creature with his own will. Giving Grane a bit and reins when he was his own character seemed a bit degrading.

(I) **AN ARMOR OF FEATHERS.** *There is no sign of any other material. The Valkyrie's costume is held together by her figure alone.*

(II) **PARSIFAL,** by Jean Delville (1890). *The recollections that litter these pages bear witness to my long obsession with Parsifal, a figure of mystical ecstasy.*

(III) **THE RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES,** by H. A. Guerber (1909)

(PAGE 126) COVER STUDY. Pastel, 24 x 32 cm

(PAGE 127- 128) STUDY IN PENCIL AND WATERCOLOR for the face of the warrior virgin

(PAGE 129) COVER STUDY. Pastel, 24 x 36 cm















(11)

KC | Speaking of Grane, the idea of the horse has changed a lot. In the early versions of the synopsis, he wasn't the Valkyrie's steed.

AA | Indeed. In the legend, Siegfried finds his horse all by himself. But he's very demanding, and to be sure of getting the best one, he drowns a whole herd!

Of course, the survivor was a horse of divine descent, the son of Odin's mount. I toyed with these ideas for a bit, but I needed to streamline the story around my main characters. What I did with Grane created a link between Siegfried and the Valkyrie. In the opera, she safeguards his parents' sword for him. In my version, she gives him her steed, a gesture with similar meaning. In Volume Two, Siegfried begins his journey from child to adult: he acquires the means to act but not the wisdom to use them well yet. The sword and the horse are supernatural, and symbols of his manhood, his hero status. And so Grane has the gift of flight, which was hinted at but never shown in Volume One.

KC | A horse that flies without wings!

AA | All the more magical, right? I stayed in the tradition of most illustrations of the Ride of the Valkyries: a horse emerging from a cloud, or rather giving birth to clouds as his hooves struck the air. Portraying one of these fantastical creatures was one of the great pleasures of doing a mythological story, and despite the difficulties inherent in drawing horses, it was a joy to animate Grane's aerial acrobatics.



(I) **GRANE.** *Studies. The Valkyrie's horse is called on to play an important role in Siegfried's story. As he is a character unto himself, the hard part was to make him expressive enough for us to read his mood without veering into caricature and excess, which would diminish his dignity.*

(II) **THE APPARITION.** *Original drawing for The Valkyrie, page 26*



KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | The final part of the story contains a very powerful scene, when Odin punishes his daughter for disobeying him. This is a literal adaptation from the opera *The Valkyrie*.

LIEBESTOD

ALEX ALICE | As in the first volume, I wanted to keep certain scenes from the operas, the ones I found the most moving, and retell them in my way. For that scene, I transposed Act III of *The Valkyrie*. This is one of the most beautiful moments of the Ring Cycle, an absolutely heartrending passage, one of the original reasons I decided to adapt this tale.

KC | And yet it's not part of Siegfried's story!

AA + KC | True. In Wagner's *The Valkyrie*, the plot before Siegfried is born. Here's what happens in a nutshell: Siegfried's parents, who represent Odin's hope, live in sin, a forbidden love. They're pursued by a horde who will put them to death. Trapped by his own law, Odin is forced to let them die. But the Valkyrie, fascinated by their love, disobeys her father and tries to save them. This situation leads to the confrontation between Odin and the Valkyrie, which takes up two sublime scenes. I borrowed the basic elements of this structure and applied them to Siegfried's story. In my version, the relationship between Odin and the Valkyrie remains the same as in the opera. By disobeying him, she carries out Odin's deepest wish... which nevertheless forces him to punish her.



AA | For me, it's the same scene. There are even some lines of dialogue that come straight from the libretto.

*Wunschmaid bist du nicht mehr, / You are no longer my daughter,
Walküre bist du gewesen: / You are no longer a Valkyrie:
Aus meinem Angesicht bist du verbannt. / I banish you from my sight.*

KC | “How could I punish you? / You must. If your law falters, the universe will fall!” Here, the Valkyrie herself offers up her apple of immortality.

AA | Right, whereas in Wagner, it's Odin/Wotan who imposes this punishment on the Valkyrie in a terrible fit of wrath. She is condemned to fall asleep, and the first to come upon her will take her virginity. She begs to be protected by a ring of flames, so that only a fearless hero might defile her.

*Dein ewig Teil / Yet you will not dishonor
nicht wirst du entehren, / an everlasting part of yourself,
Schande nicht wollen, / will not wish for a disgrace,
die dich beschimpft: / that disgraces you:
dich selbst ließest du sinken / you would demean yourself
sähest du dem Spott mich zum Spiel! / if you saw people mock and laugh at me!
(...)
dem feigen Prahler / Deliver me not
gib mich nicht preis! / unto a cowardly boaster!*

KC | Here, the mythic concept mingles with a 19th century social concept.

AA | Indeed. In Wagner, the Valkyrie is stripped of her father. She becomes a daughter of nothing. Me, I wanted to focus on something else, a very powerful emotion—that of a father forced to condemn his daughter to death.

KC | What did you keep of Brunhilde, Wagner's Valkyrie?

AA | Reading that section again reminds me how far I strayed from it. I forget my sources. I work them in, I use them, and forget my betrayals... I have the feeling Wagner's Valkyrie is a woman subject to an all-powerful father. She begs again and again, but Odin refuses.

KC | In your version, she takes the initiative, offers up her own immortality. I have the feeling Wagner's gods are more human.

AA | Yeah... in Wagner, she begs for her virtue—unless it's out of love for Siegfried, as if she'd been in love with him since before he was born. In adapting it, I tried to make it so she



doesn't beg for her life. She understands her father's duty. I wanted the gods to have a bit more detachment with regard to what was going on.

The idea of fate—so important in Norse mythology—along with the idea of an omnipotent god, from monotheism: all this makes it hard to conceive of a very human god who can be surprised by events. This might be a mistake; maybe I'm missing the point of the character. We'll see in Volume Three.

(PAGE 134) WOTAN BIDDING FAREWELL TO BRUNHILDE, by Ferdinand I. 1888

(PAGE 136) SILKSCREENED BOOKPLATE for Durango Booksellers

(ABOVE) WOTAN TAKES LEAVE OF BRUNHILDE, by Konrad Dietz (1892)



KC | In the opera, Act III recounts Odin's punishment of the Valkyrie. You do it in four pages. What are some of the weapons unique to a comics creator's arsenal?

AA | It's weird to think you're going to transfer an entire act, a wonderful act, into four pages. But still, my ambition was to hit all the emotion of the opera. I reconstructed the characters and the story to have the same dramatic stakes. But for all that, I lacked music. So I tried to make up for the silence with everything at my disposal: framing, elision, close-ups, any tool unavailable to a stage production.

For example, in the final scene between Odin and the Valkyrie, wrath and vengeance give way to a very intimate and personal scene between father and daughter, then a scene of mourning, with a funeral pyre. To translate all that, I started with a very bluish palette, dark with streaks of lightning, and then when Odin arrived, red in the background. These are very violent contrasts and color values, which give a very clear-cut look to things.

KC | You used the same high-contrast black and white at the beginning of Volume One. For me, this is an expression of terrible divinity. You draw Odin in two ways: a human-sized figure who fits in a panel, as at Mime's forge, or a giant surrounded by lightning.

AA | That's right. After that bit the setting vanishes, giving way to close-ups. The golden apple makes its appearance and we start in with yellow and gold, which lend a warmer, more luminous ambiance, while also making the play of colors more complex. This light appears between two characters, surrounded by storms and lightning, and with it the father-daughter relationship is reborn. Odin understands the mistake he's made. Finally, with a violent transition, Odin changes time and location, and the atmosphere is totally

different. We've left the storm clouds for the twilight of the second day of the Ring Cycle, a scene like the first scene of the book. Now the colors are very mild, the characters gray, the clear sky tinged a bit in the background for this scene of death and farewell. Then the red saturation returns when the flames rise, we're in a tragedy now, the music swells... I composed these four pages while listening to the third act. They came quite naturally. In Wagner, we go from wrath to explanations (much longer, of course), and finally reach the moment when Odin kisses the Valkyrie to give her death, a truly magnificent moment I don't think I left enough breathing room for, unfortunately.

I want to add something with regard to the tools of adaptation: Odin changes size, from eight yards tall at the beginning to human height, which is kind of hard to do onstage. These sections express moments when the god foregrounds his humanity. The transition is handled unconsciously, through elision, a comics creator's most powerful weapon.

KC | And with this scene, The Valkyrie ends... but is this really the last we'll see of the Valkyrie?

AA | You'll have to go consult the Völva to find out!



(PAGE 138) AS HE MOVES SLOWLY AWAY, WOTAN TURNS AND LOOKS SORROWFULLY BACK AT BRUNHILDE, illustration from The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie, by Arthur Rackham (1910).

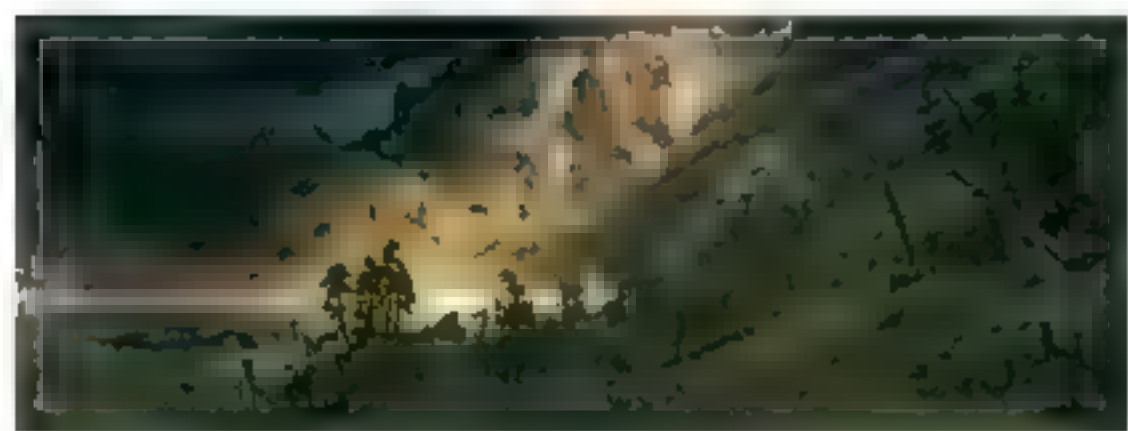


TO BE CONTINUED...

BOOK CREDITS



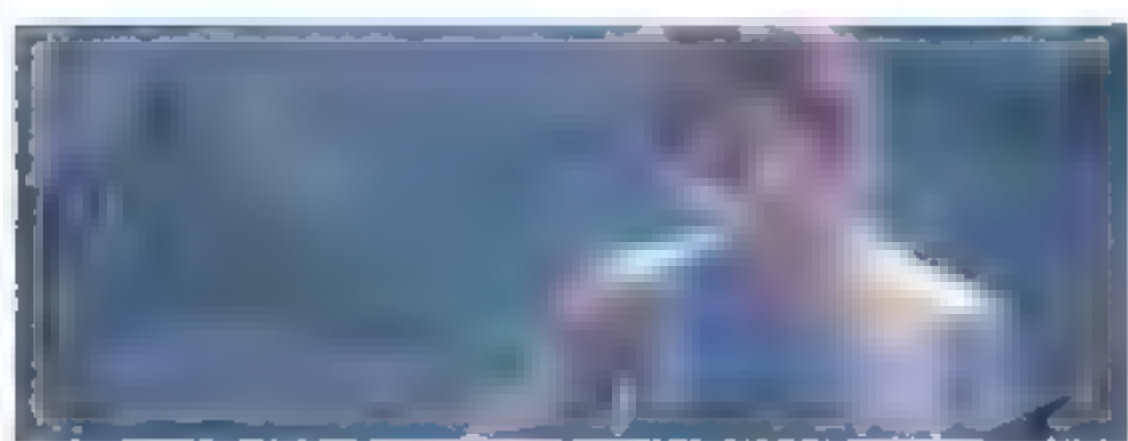
(PAGE 84)
KRIEMHILD, by Fritz Lang, *Die Nibelungen* (1924). Akg-images, publishing/press use only



(PAGE 86-87)
A STORM IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS – MT. ROSALIE, 1866, (oil on canvas) by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902). Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA/ The Bridgeman Art Library



(PAGE 106)
BRUNHILDE SLOWLY AND SILENTLY LEADS HER HORSE DOWN THE PATH TO THE CAVE, illustration from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, 1910 (color litho) by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939). Private Collection/ The Stapleton Collection/ The Bridgeman Art Library Nationality / copyright status: English / in copyright until 2010



(PAGE 116)
THE VALKYRIE’S VIGIL, 1906, (w/c & gold paint on paper) by Edward Robert Hughes (1851-1914). Private Collection – Photo © Peter Nahum at The Leicester Galleries, London – The Bridgeman Art Library.



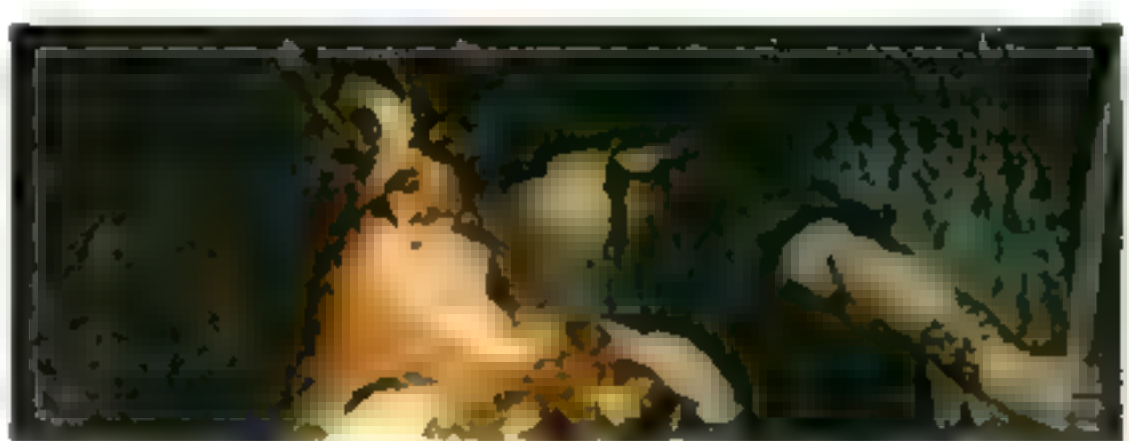
(PAGE 121)
I FLEE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND AM PURSUED: WARFATHER FOLLOWS CLOSE. HE NEARS, HE NEARS, IN FURY! SAVE THIS WOMAN! SISTERS, YOUR HELP!, illustration from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, 1910 (color litho) by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939). Private Collection/ The Stapleton Collection/ The Bridgeman Art Library. Nationality / copyright status: English / in copyright until 2010



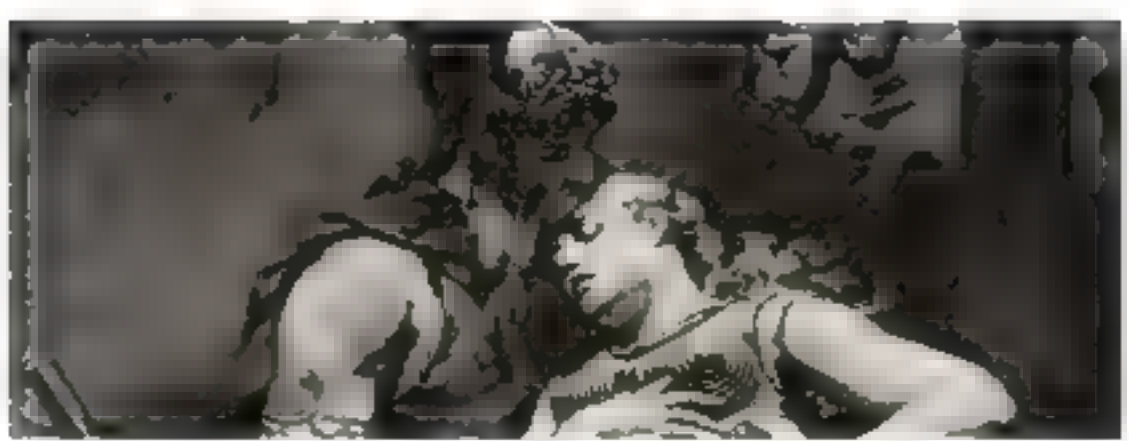
(PAGE 124)
PARSIFAL, by Jean Delville (1890). Drawing, 70x38cm. Delville Collection, Brussels, Belgium



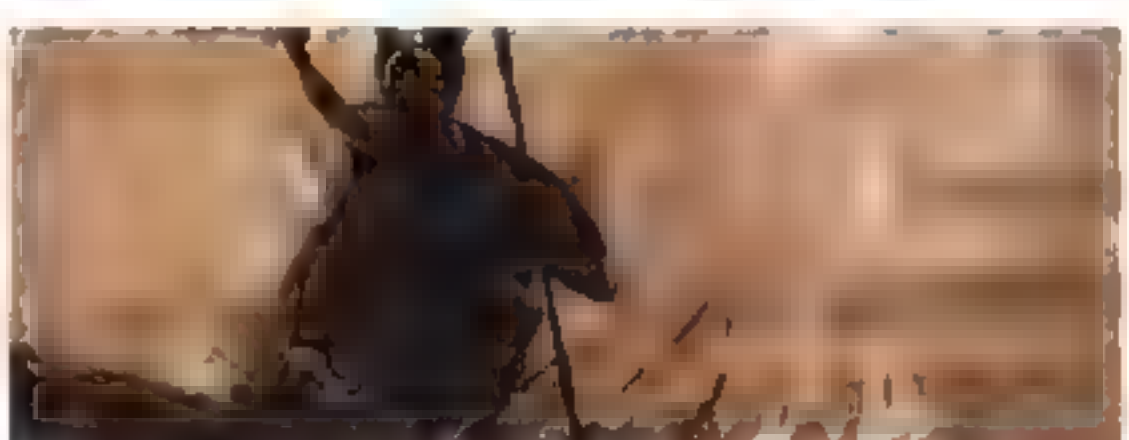
(PAGE 125)
THE RIDE OF THE VALKYRS, by H.A. Guerber (1909)



(PAGE 134)
WOTAN BIDDING FAREWELL TO BRUNHILDE, 1908 (oil on canvas) by Ferdinand Lecke (1859-1923). Private Collection/ © Whitford Fine Art London, UK The Bridgeman Art Library Nationality copyright status: German out of copyright



(PAGE 137)
WOTAN TAKES LEAVE OF BRUNHILD, by Konrad Dietz (1892)



(PAGE 138)
AS HE MOVES SLOWLY AWAY, WOTAN TURNS AND LOOKS SORROWFULLY BACK AT BRUNNHILDE, illustration from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, 1910 (color litho) by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939). Private Collection/ The Stapleton Collection/ The Bridgeman Art Library. Nationality / copyright status: English / in copyright until 2010

PAGE 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 100-101, 104-105, 114-115, 122-123, 130-131
Images from the film *Siegfried: Twilight of the Gods* © 2003-2007 Pendragon Imageforge. See complete credits in the first volume

PAGE 2-3 & 6-7
Backgrounds by Alex Alice

PAGE 4-5
Backgrounds by Patrick Suau

PAGE 100-101, 114-115 & 122-123
Backgrounds by Julien Georgel and characters by Alex Hessi

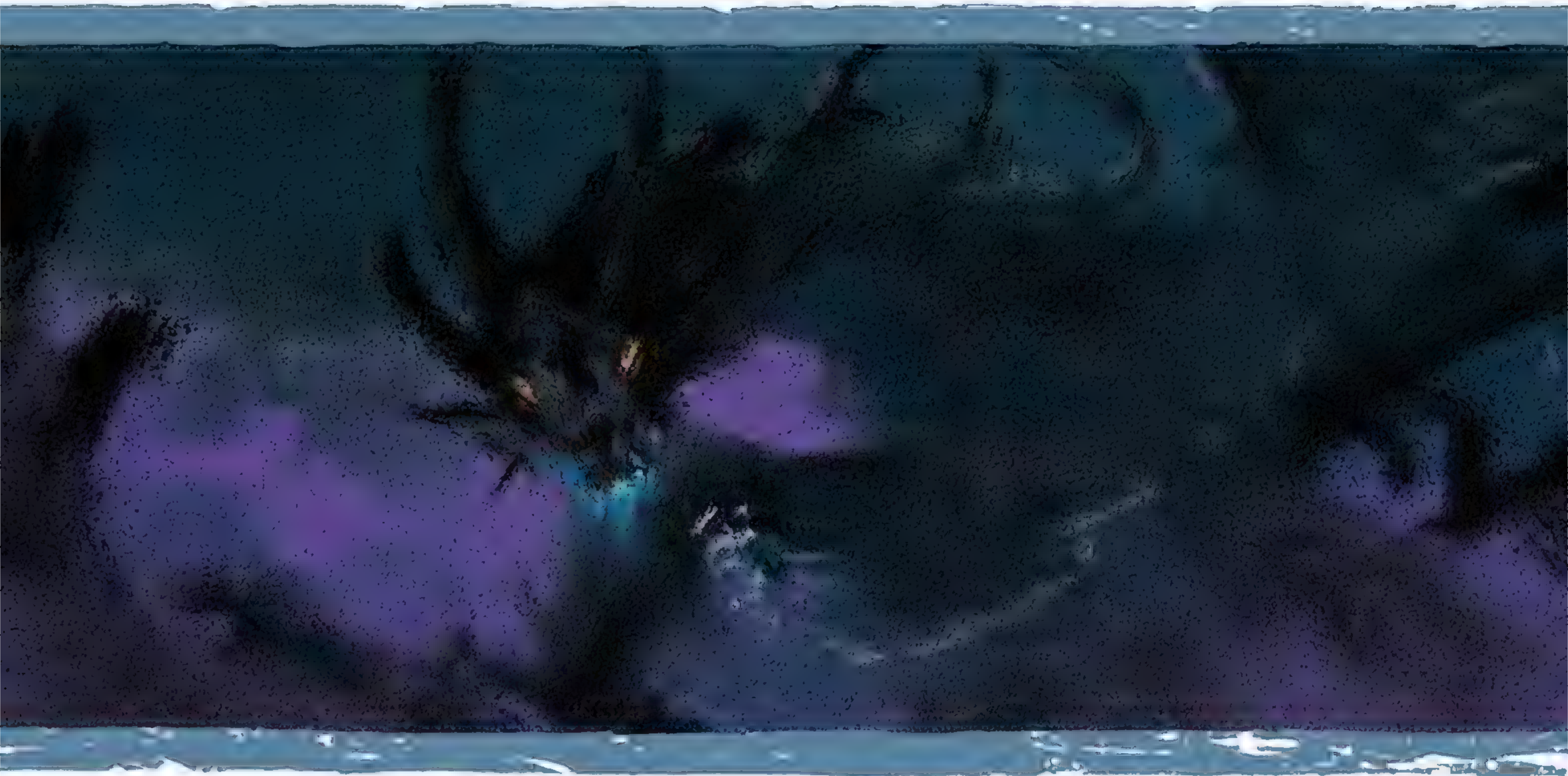
PAGE 142
Siegfried by Christophe “Zébé” Lourdelet.





*"All that is shall come to an end.
A dark day
dawns for the gods:"*

THE RHINEGOLD, SCENE 4



COMING SOON

ALEX ALICE

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